KX
b
690
75606
1433

00075606

BOMBAY BRANCH
OF THE
Royal Asiatic Society.
CLASS

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 02 July, 2018

00075606

75606 a.c

ANNAN WATER.

CHAPTER XIV.

IS A LITTLE MYSTERIOUS.

WHILE the persevering Caussidière was inspecting the interior of Annandale Castle, Miss Hetherington was busily making inquiries about him at Dumfries.

She had commenced in the hope of hearing something which she might use against him; to her amazement, and, it must be admitted, rather to her annoyance, public opinion was decidedly in his favour. Caussidière was known to one and all as an

inoffensive man enough, who always conducted himself properly, and had a smile and a kind word for everyone.

The lady was honestly disappointed at the result of her researches, and when at length her carriage stopped before the door of the school which Caussidière attended, she was by no means in an amiable frame of mind. She stalked into the house and sat bolt upright in the drawing-room, and when the mistress appeared she looked severely at her, and blurted out at once the thought that was in her mind.

'Aweel,' she said, 'I dare swear you're like the rest o' the silly townsfolk; you'll be tellin' me *you* think weel o' this French carle.'

The lady looked puzzled.

'I don't quite understand,' she said.

'Tell me, then, in plain English, what you think o' this Monsieur Caussidière, as he calls himsel'.'

'Of Monsieur Caussidière? I think very well indeed of him, Miss Hetherington.'

'And if you had to send him packin', nae doubt you'd be sorry.'

'I should be very sorry.'

'And why?'

'Because I consider him a good teacher; besides, he is pleasant, and has always conducted himself well. I fear you do not like him, Miss Hetherington.'

'And ye fear right. I dinna like him and I dinna trust him. Will ye bid him quit the school?'

The lady looked troubled.

'Give up the school?' she said. 'I am afraid, madam, I could not do that.'

'And why no?'

'It would hardly be just to the gentleman. Consider, Miss Hetherington, he has always behaved well, and done his work admirably. I could not bring forward a single thing against him.'

'Aweel weel, maybe you're right; but with or without your help I'll keep him awa' frae Marjorie Annan.'

And without waiting for further conversation she abruptly took her leave.

She did not call at the minister's house that night, but drove straight up to the castle.

Her mind was in a strange state of perturbation; she did not know which way to act. She could not explain even to herself the reason of her curious detestation of the Frenchman. It was an omen, and she

believed in omens. Though she had not been able to make one person speak against him, her heart told her that evil would surely come, unless he could be got fairly out of the way. As that seemed impossible, at any rate for the time being, the next and only thing to do was to remove Marjorie from his close vicinity.

Miss Hetherington spent that night in dreaming and planning; the next day she ordered out her carriage and drove down to the manse.

She was lucky enough to find both Mr. Lorraine and Marjorie. The latter, who was looking flushed and somewhat pleased, informed her visitor that she had been packing up her things to return to school on the following day.

'And ye'll be glad to go?' said Miss

Hetherington, looking at the girl's bright eyes and smiling lips.

'Yes,' said Marjorie candidly, 'I shall be glad.'

The lady was silent for a few moments; then she turned to Mr. Lorraine.

'You were ne'er muckle in favour of Marjorie's French lessons,' she said abruptly.

The clergyman started, but made no reply, so she continued sharply:

'You're no the man to deny what you ken to be true, Mr. Lorraine.'

'Dear me, no; I am not denying it, Miss Hetherington,' said the clergyman mildly. 'Now you mention it, I remember I did say at the time I thought French was an accomplishment which Marjorie would never be likely to need; but you thought

otherwise, and there was no more to be said.'

'Ay, I was an old fool. . . . Weel,' she continued after a pause, 'I'm no of the same mind to-day. The lassie's had enough French for a while. We'll take it off this quarter, and she can gie her time till other things.'

While she spoke Miss Hetherington turned her eyes from Mr. Lorraine to Marjorie, and she saw the girl's countenance fall.

'Miss Hetherington,' she said, 'what have I done? How have I annoyed you?'

'Hark till her,' broke in the lady with a grim smile, '"what have I done and hoo have I annoyed you?" because an old woman changes her mind. Marjorie, my

bairn, I'm just anxious to do what I think will be for the best.'

'But, but there must be something,' began Marjorie, when her trembling voice warned her to be silent, and with quivering lips she turned away. Miss Hetherington watched her quietly; when she turned again to Mr. Lorraine, she saw that his eyes were also fixed upon the girl.

'Well, Mr. Lorraine,' she said sternly, 'is it to be as I say?'

The clergyman hesitated.

'Marjorie is a good girl, Miss Hetherington,' said he, 'and would be always anxious to do as you wish, but I think—I fear she is sorry to give up her French studies.'

'She's but a foolish lassie, and she may be glad that she has got elders to judge for her. She'll gie up French for the

present, Mr. Lorraine, and by-and-by—weel, we shall see.'

This time Mr. Lorraine did not speak. He looked a little sadly at Marjorie, but he was quite man of the world enough to know that it would be a foolish thing to set Miss Hetherington's will at defiance. Besides, to his mind there was nothing so wonderful in the situation at all. Miss Hetherington had bought the right to be humoured. Ten to one her fancy would disappear as quickly as it had come, and Marjorie would be indulged again. Knowing her nature as he did, he attempted no further remonstrance, and when Miss Hetherington said again :

'Is that settled, Mr. Lorraine?' he answered mildly :

'Most certainly, Miss Hetherington, if

you wish it. You have shown that you have Marjorie's interest at heart, and I have no doubt you are acting for the best.'

Miss Hetherington rose.

'Marjorie Annan,' said she, 'gie me your arm to the gate.'

Marjorie obeyed courteously enough. She assisted the lady to the gate and into her carriage, but when Miss Hetherington bent forward to kiss her cheek she shrank away.

'Marjorie, Marjorie,' she murmured, 'you think I'm a hard-hearted old woman, but I'm trying hard to be your friend.'

The carriage moved off. It had gone scarcely a hundred yards when the lady pulled the check string and ordered her coachman to change his course.

'Drive to the inn where the French teacher lives,' she said.

'They're telling me, my leddy, the Frenchman has gone to Dumfries!'

'Dumfries?'

'Aye, Miss Hetherington, to be ready for the school.'

'Then drive to Dumfries.'

The coachman obeyed, and turned his horse's head towards the Dumfries road.

When they reached the town they drove straight to Caussidière's lodgings, and with a very determined face the lady of the Castle descended and walked up the door-steps.

She knocked sharply at the door, which was immediately opened by a servant girl.

'I'm seeking the gentleman that lodges

here—the French teacher,' she said, stepping without ceremony into the lobby.

Caussidière, who was within, put his head out of the door of his room, and recognised his visitor at once with a beaming smile.

'Pray step this way, Miss Hetherington,' he cried. 'I am delighted to see you!'

She followed him into his little sitting-room, and stood leaning upon her staff and looking at him with her black eyes, while he drew forward a chair and begged her to be seated. She nodded grimly, and glanced round the apartment at the table littered with correspondence, at the books scattered here and there, at the roses and creepers which peeped in at the open window. Then she walked to the chair

he had prepared for her, and sitting down, looked at him fixedly again. Not in the least daunted, he stood smiling at her, and waiting for her to explain her business.

At last she spoke in her native tongue.

'Do you ken what brought me here?' she asked sharply.

Caussidière shrugged his shoulders.

'I have not an idea,' he replied; 'and yet,' he added, 'I have been thinking—ah, perhaps it was a presentiment!—I have been thinking that I should have the pleasure!'

His tone, despite its extreme politeness, was significant enough to attract the attention of one so keen-witted.

'What do you mean by that?' she demanded, gazing at him as if to read his very soul.

'What I say, Miss Hetherington. I am *spirituel*, and have these presentiments. When I saw you first, I knew that we should become better acquainted. But will you talk to me in my own language, which you speak to admiration?'

'I'll speak till ye in simple English, my lad, or what's the same, to my thinking, good Scots Doric. I'm here for plain speaking, and I'll use nae heathen tongue this day. First and foremost, how muckle is Marjorie Annan owing ye for her French lessons?'

As she asked the question, Miss Hetherington drew out an old-fashioned silk purse and began examining its contents. Finding that the Frenchman did not reply, she looked up and repeated it.

'How muckle is Marjorie Annan owing ye? Tell me that, if you please.'

'Nothing, Miss Hetherington,' he replied.

'Naething? Then Marjorie has paid ye already, maybe?'

'Yes, she has paid me,' returned Caussidière quietly.

Naturally enough, his manner had changed, and his courteous smile had given way to a cold expression of hauteur, tempered with gentle indignation.

'How muckle has she paid ye?' demanded the lady of the Castle.

'She has paid me,' answered the Frenchman, 'with her sympathy, with her sweet society. I have not taken money from her; I shall never take it. My labour, Miss Hetherington, has been labour of love.'

The lady's eyes flashed, and putting up her purse, she uttered an impatient exclamation.

'Nae doubt!' she cried. 'But from this day forward your labour's done. I have come here to pay you your hire, and to tell you with my ain mouth that Marjorie Annan's French lessons are ended, and that if she needs mair, she'll get them from another teacher.'

Caussidière flushed angrily, but still preserved his composure. He gazed earnestly and thoughtfully at his visitor for some moments, and then said, with the same peculiar smile he had worn at first:

'May I ask *you* a question, Miss Hetherington?'

'If you please.'

'I should like to know what authority

you have to act on behalf of my dear pupil? I don't ask out of mere curiosity; but you would oblige me by informing me if the young lady herself has requested you to come here on so peculiar an errand?'

'The young lady?—a bairn who kens naething of the world!'

'But, pardon me, had you her authority to dismiss me, or that of her guardian?'

'The bairn's a bairn, and the minister's old and foolish. I've taen the business into my own hands.'

'Indeed!' exclaimed Caussidière, still sarcastically smiling.

'Aye, indeed!' repeated the lady, with growing irritation. 'And I warn you, once and for a', to cease meddling with the lassie. Aye, ye may smile! But you'll smile, maybe, on the wrong side o' your face, my

friend, if ye dinna tak' the warning I bring ye, and cease molesting Marjorie Annan.'

It was clear that Caussidière was amused. Instead of smiling now, he laughed outright, still most politely, but with a self-satisfaction which was very irritating to his opponent. Subduing his amusement with an effort, he quietly took a chair, and sat down opposite Miss Hetherington.

'Weel,' she cried, striking with her staff upon the floor, 'what's your answer to my message?'

'You must give me a little time; you have so taken me by surprise. In the first place, why do you object to my friendship for the young lady? My interest in her is great; I respect and admire her beyond measure. Why can we not be friends?

Why can I not continue to be her teacher?'

'A bonnie teacher! A braw friend! Do you think I'm blind?'

'I think,' said Caussidière, with a mocking bow, 'that your eyes are very wide open, Miss Hetherington. You perceive quite clearly that I *love* Miss Annan.'

The lady started angrily.

'What?' she cried.

'I love her, and hope some day, with your permission, to make her my wife.'

Trembling from head to foot, Miss Hetherington started to her feet.

'Your wife!' she echoed, as if thunderstruck.

'Why not?' asked Caussidière calmly. 'I am not rich, but I am a gentleman; and

my connections are honourable, I assure you. Why, then, should you distrust me so? If you will permit me, I think I can give you very good reasons for approving of my union with Miss Annan.'

'How daur ye think of it!' cried Miss Hetherington. 'Marry that bairn! I forbid ye even to come near her, to speak wi' her again.'

Caussidière shrugged his shoulders.

'Let us return, if you please, to where we began. You have not yet informed me by what right you attempt to interfere with the happiness of my dear pupil.'

'By what right?'

'Precisely. What may be the nature of your *relationship* to the young lady?'

As he spoke he fixed his eyes keenly upon her, to her obvious embarrassment. Her

pale face grew paler than ever, though her eyes flashed dangerously.

'I am Marjorie Annan's friend,' she answered, after a pause.

'Of that I am aware, Miss Hetherington. I am aware also that you have been very kind to her, that you have assisted her from childhood with large sums out of your own pocket. May I ask, without offence, have you done all this out of pure philanthropy, because you have such a charitable heart?'

He still watched her with the same half-sarcastic, penetrating look. Her embarrassment increased, and she did not reply; but her lips became dry, and she moistened them nervously with the tip of her tongue.

Suddenly his manner changed, and he rose smiling from his seat.

'You are fatigued,' he said politely. 'Let me offer you a glass of wine.'

She declined his offer with an angry gesture, and moved towards the door.

'I hae warned you,' she said, in a low voice. 'I hae warned you and forbidden you. If ye dinna heed my warning, I'll maybe find other means to bring you to your senses.'

She would have left the house, but quietly approaching the door, he set his back against it and blocked the way.

'Pray do not go yet,' he said. 'Pardon me, but you *must* not. You have given me your message, my dear Miss Hetherington; now let me ask you to hear mine.'

There was something in his manner so ominous, so significant, that the lady again became startled.

'What's your will with *me*?' she cried impatiently.

'Will you sit and listen a little while?'

'I'll stand where I am. Weel?'

'First let me thank you for the kindness of your servant in showing me over the beautiful castle where you live. I am interested in all old houses, and yours is charming.'

She stared at him in blank amazement.

'The Castle! when were ye there?'

'Just before I returned to Dumfries. I regretted that you were not at home, in order that I might ask your kind permission; but in your absence I took the liberty of making a *reconnaissance*. I came away delighted with the place. The home of your ancestors, I presume?'

The words were innocent enough, but the

speaker's manner was far from assuring, and his eyes, keenly fixed on hers, still preserved that penetrating light—almost a threat.

'Deil tak' the man! Why do you glower at me like that? You entered my hoose like a thief, then, when I was awa'?'

'Ah, do not say that; it is ungenerous. I went merely as an amateur to see the ruins, and I found—what shall I say?—so much more than I expected.'

He paused, while she stood trembling; then he continued:

'The Castle is so picturesque, the ruin so *ravissante*, and the pictures—the pictures are so romantic and so strange. Ah, it is a privilege indeed to have such a heritage and such an ancestry; to belong to a family so great, so full of honour; to have a

'scutcheon without one blot since the day when the first founder wore it on his shield.'

It was clear that he was playing with her, laughing at her. As he proceeded, his manner became almost aggressive in its studied insolence, its polite sarcasm. Unable any longer to restrain her anger, Miss Hetherington, with outstretched hand, moved towards the door.

'Stand awa', and let me pass.'

He obeyed her in a moment, and with a profound bow, drew aside; but as she passed him, and put her trembling hand upon the door-handle, he said in a low voice close to her ear:

'It would be a pity, perhaps, after all, to quarrel with one who knows so much.'

She turned furiously, and fixed her eyes upon him.

'What's that?' she cried.

'Who knows so much, let us say, about the morals of your bonnie Scotland as compared with those of *la belle France*.'

'What do you mean? Speak out! What do ye mean?'

He smiled, and bending again close to her ear, he whispered something which drove the last tint of blood from her cheek, and made her stagger and gasp as if about to fall. Then, before she could recover herself, or utter a single word, he said aloud, with the utmost politeness:

'And now, my dear lady, will you stay a little while longer and talk with me about Marjorie Annan?'

CHAPTER XV.

MARJORIE GOES AWAY.

When Miss Hetherington left the Frenchman's rooms that afternoon, she tottered like one enfeebled by the sudden oncoming of age. Monsieur Caussidière was beside her; it was his hand which placed her in her carriage, his head which bowed politely as the carriage moved away. But the lady seemed neither to see nor hear. Her face was deathly pale and her eyes were fixed; she entered the carriage mechanically, and

mechanically lay back among the moth-eaten cushions; but she never came to herself until the carriage stopped before the door of Annandale Castle.

The approaching carriage wheels had been heard by the inmates of the Castle, so that when the vehicle stopped, there stood Sandie Sloane ready to assist his mistress to alight. With her usual erect carriage and firm tread Miss Hetherington stepped from the vehicle and walked up the stone steps to the Castle door, saying, as she passed the old serving man:

'Sandie Sloane, come ben wi' me!'

She walked on, Sandie following. They walked into the great dining-room, and the door closed upon the two.

What passed at that interview no one knew; but half an hour later Sandie came

forth, returned to the kitchen, and sat there crying like a heart-broken child.

'Mysie,' said he to the housekeeper, 'Mysie, woman, I'm turned awa'—oot on the world. God help me! The mistress has shown me the door o' Annandale Castle.'

Before Mysie could reply, the bell rang violently. She ran up the stairs, entered the dining-room, and found Miss Hetherington still sitting in her cloak and bonnet, and looking strangely disturbed.

'Mysie,' she said, 'where is Sandie Sloane?'

'In the kitchen, my lady.'

'In ten minutes you'll come back to me and tell me that he has left the Castle. Do you understand?'

'I do, my lady, but——'

'Mysie, listen to me. You hae been a good servant to me, and I want to be a good mistress to you, therefore I warn you. From this night forth, if ever you allow Sandie Sloane or any other *man* to cross the threshold o' this house without my express permission, out you go like Sandie. 'Tis the men that bring all the harm and all the sorrow that ever came into the world. Now go, Mysie, and dinna come back till you tell me that Sandie is awa'.'

It was not till two days later that Mr. Lorraine, happening to call at the Castle, heard that Miss Hetherington could not see him, for she had taken to her bed and was seriously ill. He heard also from Mysie, who seemed scared and wild, that her mistress had never been herself since that night when Sandie Sloane had been driven

from his situation. The clergyman, much shocked and mystified, asked to be allowed to see the lady, but Mysie, remembering her mistress's instructions, refused to permit him to place his foot inside the door. After a little persuasion, however, she consented to allow him to remain on the threshold while she went and informed her mistress of his call.

In a short time the woman returned, and Mr. Lorraine was at once admitted to the bedside of the mistress of the house.

Mr. Lorraine began forthwith to express his regret at the lady's illness, but he was at once stopped.

'"Twasna' of myself I wanted to speak,' she said, in her hard cold tones; '"twas o' something that concerns you far more—"twas of one dear to you—"twas of Marjorie Annan!'

'Of Marjorie?'

'Aye—do ye mind, Mr. Lorraine, when you first showed me the mite o' a bairnie, I gave ye some money, and I told you I'd do what I could to help you wi' the burden? Do ye ken why I did that, Mr. Lorraine?'

'Because you had a kind heart, Miss Hetherington, and were sorry for the little one.'

'Sorry! aye, that was it. I was sorry for her then—but now it's both sorrow and love, Mr. Lorraine. I'm a foolish old woman you'll say, but the bairn has found her way to my hard heart—as surely as you love her, Mr. Lorraine, *I* love her mysel'.'

Mr. Lorraine was silent, for he was growing rather perplexed. What did it all

mean? Suddenly an idea came to him. Miss Hetherington wanted 'a reward' for her past kindnesses—the time had come when they could all be repaid. She was ill and alone, she wished Marjorie to nurse her. A poor return enough, when all was said and done, for the kindnesses Marjorie had received!

Mr. Lorraine was about to make the offer, when he suddenly paused, remembering the difficulty he had always had in getting Marjorie to visit the Castle at all. How could they possibly induce her to take her place, for weeks perhaps, beside the sickbed of its mistress? He was still sitting in perplexed silence when Miss Hetherington spoke.

'Mr. Lorraine,' said she, 'where *is* Marjorie?'

'Marjorie is at the manse,' returned the clergyman, dreading what the next question might be.

'At the manse! and wherefore is she no at the school? She should have gone back ere this.'

'Yes; she should have gone, but the lassie was not herself, so I kept her with me. She is troubled in her mind at what you said about the French lessons, Miss Hetherington, and she is afraid she has annoyed you.'

'And she would be sorry?'

'How could she fail to be? You have been her best friend.'

There was a great pause, which was broken by Miss Hetherington.

'Mr. Lorraine,' said she, 'I've aye tried to give you good advice about Marjorie. I

kenned weel that twa silly men like 'yersel' and that fool Solomon Mucklebackit wanted a woman's sharp wits and keen eyes to help them train the lassie. I've watched her close, and I see what maybe you dinna see. Therefore, I advise you again—send her awa' to Edinburgh for awhile—'twill be for her gude.'

'To Edinburgh?'

'Aye; do you fear she'll no obey?'

'Not at all; when I tell her you wish it she will go.'

Miss Hetherington sat bolt upright, and stared round the room like a stag at bay.

'*I* wish it!' she exclaimed. 'I dinna wish it—mind that, Mr. Lorraine. If onybody daurs say *I* wish it, ye'll tell them 'tis a lee. *You* wish it; *you'll* send her awa'; 'tis for the bairn's good!'

Mr. Lorraine began to be of opinion that Miss Hetherington's brain was affected; he could not account for her eccentricity in any other way. Nevertheless, her whims had to be attended to; and as in this case they would cause no great inconvenience, he promised implicit obedience to her will.

'Yes, you are right, Miss Hetherington; 'twill do the child good, and she shall go,' he said, as he rose to take his leave.

But the lady called him back.

'Mr. Lorraine,' she said, 'send Marjorie up to me to say good-bye;' and having again promised to obey her, Mr. Lorraine retired.

When he reached home, he was rather relieved to find that his foster-child was out; when she returned, he was busily engaged with Solomon; and it was not

indeed until after evening prayers that the two found themselves alone. Then Mr. Lorraine summoned Marjorie to his side, took her head between his hands, and kissed her fondly upon the brow.

'Marjorie, my doo,' he said, 'I've been thinking to-day I would give you a change. I shall send you away for a few days, Marjorie, to my sister's house in Edinburgh.'

The girl opened her eyes with troubled wonder.

'You are going to send me away?' she said. 'Ah, Mr. Lorraine, are you angry with me too?'

'Angry with you? Angry with my Marjorie?—no, my darling, it is not that. I am afraid I am too fond of you, my bairn. I have been selfish, and kept you o'er much by my side. I shall miss you, Marjorie,

for you brought sunshine and happiness with you when you first entered the old manse door, but I shall get my reward when I see my bairn come back to me with roses in her cheeks again.'

The girl clung to him, and her gentle eyes filled with tears.

'Oh, Mr. Lorraine,' she said, 'do not send me away!'

'Why, Marjorie, my bairn, why are you so sad? You talk as if we should never meet again. After all, 'tis but for a short while, and 'twill be better for us all. You'll see braw things in Edinburgh, and when you come home you can brighten up Solomon and me with the stories of what you have seen. It will be like living through our youth again to hear you, Marjorie!'

Marjorie patted his hand and smiled through her tears. Yet despite her attempt at cheerfulness she felt very sad. Was it a foreshadowing of the future? Perhaps, for something told her even then that the parting from her dear foster-father was to be long and sad.

The next day, however, she was brighter; they could hear her singing about the house as she collected her things together, and now and then she would run into the little parlour where Mr. Lorraine sat busily at work upon his Sunday sermon, and ask him to talk to her again of all the wonders she was going to see.

By early in the afternoon all was done, and as Marjorie was to start early on the morrow, she, in obedience to Mr. Lorraine's wish, put on her bonnet and went up to

the Castle to wish Miss Hetherington good-bye.

She had heard from Mr. Lorraine that the lady was indisposed, but he had not spoken of the malady as serious, and she was therefore utterly unprepared for what she saw.

She was admitted by Mysie, conducted along the dreary passage, and led at once towards Miss Hetherington's bedroom.

'She's waitin' on ye,' said Mysie; 'she's been waitin' on ye all the day.'

Marjorie stepped into the room, looked round, and then shrank fearfully back towards the door. Could this be Miss Hetherington — this little, shrivelled old woman, with the dim eyes and thin silvery hair? She glanced keenly at Marjorie; then, seeing the girl shrink away, she held forth her hand and said:

'Come awa' ben, Marjorie, my bairnie; come ben.'

'You—you are not well, Miss Hetherington,' said Marjorie. 'I am so sorry!'

She came forward and stretched forth her hand. Miss Hetherington took it, held it, and gazed up into the girl's face.

'I'm no just mysel', Marjorie,' she said; 'but whiles the best of us come to this pass. Did ye think I was immortal, Marjorie Annan, and that the palsied finger o' death couldna be pointed at me as weel as at another?'

'Of death!' said Marjorie, instinctively withdrawing her hand from the old lady's tremulous grasp. 'Oh, Miss Hetherington, you surely will not die!'

'Wha can tell? Surely I shall die when

my time comes, and wha will there be to shed a tear?'

Marjorie looked at her sadly, but said nothing. The tones were peevish, the face looked awful and old. Some great change had taken place in her protectress which Marjorie could not comprehend.

For a time there was silence; then Miss Hetherington spoke:

'What more have you got to say to me, Marjorie Annan?'

The girl started as from a dream, and rose hurriedly from her seat.

'Nothing more,' she said. 'Mr. Lorraine thought I had better come and wish you good-bye. I am going away!'

'Mr. Lorraine!—you didna wish it yersel'?'

'Yes, I—I wished it——'

'Aweel, good-bye!'

She held forth her trembling hands again, and Marjorie placed her warm fingers between them.

'Good-bye, Miss Hetherington.'

She withdrew her hand and turned away, feeling that the good-bye had been spoken, and that her presence was no longer desired by the proud mistress of Annandale. She had got half-way to the door when her steps were arrested—a voice called her back.

'Marjorie! Marjorie Annan!'

She turned, started, then running back, fell on her knees beside Miss Hetherington's chair. For the first time in her life Marjorie saw her crying.

'Dear Miss Hetherington, what is it?' she said.

'Tis the old tale, the old tale!' replied the lady, drying her eyes. 'Won't you kiss me, Marjorie, and say only once that you're sorry to leave me sickening here?'

'I am very sorry, said Marjorie; then she timidly bent forward and touched the lady's cheek with her lips.

Curiously enough, after having solicited the embrace, Miss Hetherington shrank away.

'Cold and loveless,' she murmured. 'But Marjorie, my bairn, I'm no blaming ye for the sins o' your forbears. Good-bye, lassie, good-bye.'

This time Marjorie did leave the room and the Castle, feeling thoroughly mystified as to what it could all mean.

But both the interview and the eccentric

manner of the old lady soon went out of her mind. When she reached the manse she found she had still many preparations to make.

Early the next morning, after bidding an affectionate good-bye to her two foster-fathers, she started on her journey to Edinburgh.

CHAPTER XVI.

BY THE FIRTH OF FORTH.

On the outskirts of the town of Leith, and on the direct road of communication between Leith and Edinburgh, stood the plain abode of the Rev. Mungo Menteith, minister of the Free Kirk of Scotland. The church itself lay within a stone's throw ; and from the upper windows of the house was seen on the one hand a panorama of the busy waters of the Firth and the distant shores of Fife, and on the other the heights of Arthur's Seat, towering high above

the clustering habitations of 'Auld Reekie.'

The Rev. Mr. Menteith had espoused, late in life, the only sister of Mr. Lorraine, a little, timid, clinging woman, with fair hair and light blue eyes, who was as wax in the bony hands of her pious husband. The clergyman—a tall, cadaverous man of fifty, with cavernous eye-sockets, a beetling brow, and a saturnine complexion—was a pillar of the Church, and a shining light to an admiring congregation. No preacher, even in Scotland, distributed the threats of eternal perdition with more impartial relish, or was so far removed from spiritual backsliding in any question of gloomy Calvinistic dogma.

At the house of this pair, one morning in early summer, arrived Marjorie Annan, escorted thither in a hired fly from Edin-

burgh by the minister. It was by no means her first visit, and the welcome she received, if a little melancholy, was not altogether devoid of sympathy. Her aunt was an affectionate creature, though weak and superstitious; and Mr. Menteith, like many of his class, was by no means as hard as the doctrines he upheld. They had no children of their own, and the coming of one so pretty and so close of kin was like a gleam of sunshine.

So Marjorie was soon at home. Her bedroom at the top of the house commanded a pleasant view of land and sea, and the busy prospect seemed quite delightful to her simple gaze, accustomed to the quiet places of a sleepy country town. True, there was a good deal of gloomy praying, and much talk of a solemn turn,

but Marjorie was used to all that, having spent all her days, as it were, in the shadow of the Church.

A week passed away, with one supernaturally dreary Sabbath, spent in what may be called, figuratively, wailing and gnashing of teeth. The week-days were spent by Marjorie in visiting friends of the family, in quiet *têtes-à-têtes* with Mrs. Menteith, and in country and seaside walks alone. Her bright face and pretty figure soon became familiar objects in Leith and its vicinity.

At last there came a day of terrific dissipation, when what is known by profane Scotchmen as a 'tea and cookie shine' was given by one of the elders of the kirk. There were cakes of all kinds, tea and coffee in profusion, and much extempore dis-

coursing by divers reverend gentlemen. To a young girl accustomed to the gay world the whole affair might have seemed dismal enough, but to Marjorie it was quite delightful. It was something at least to see society of some sort, and to chat, even in the Church's shadow, with young people of her own age.

Early in the evening Mr. Menteith was called away, and when the meeting broke up at about nine o'clock, Marjorie and her aunt had to walk home alone. It was a fine moonlight night, and as they left the elder's house and lingered on the doorstep, Marjorie saw standing in the street a figure which she seemed to know.

She started and looked again, and the figure returned her look. In a moment, to

her utter amazement, she recognised Caussidière.

Startled and afraid, not knowing what to say or do, she descended the steps by her aunt's side.

As she did so the figure disappeared.

She walked on up the street, trembling and wondering, while Mrs. Menteith talked with feeble rapture of the feast they had left and its accompanying 'edification.'

'Did you take notice of Mr. Montgomery, Marjorie? He was only ordained last hairst, and they're telling me he has a call to Strathpepper already. He seemed muckle taken with yourself.'

Mr. Montgomery was a cadaverous young man, with large feet and large red hands, and Marjorie had indeed noticed his admiration, finding it very disagreeable.

'When you marry, Marjorie,' continued her aunt, 'and you'll be marrying some day, I hope and pray it will be a member of our kirk—best of all, a minister like your uncle. Mr. Ferguson, the linen-draper, is a marrying man—him with the long beard and the glasses; he's just for all the world like the picture of an Apostle.'

Marjorie laughed nervously.

'I'm not thinking of marrying,' she replied.

'Weel, there's time enough. But marriage with a holy man is a sheaf of blessing. What thought you of young Mr. Spence, who sat by your side and handed you the currant bun?'

Marjorie made some wandering reply, paying little heed to the question; for at that moment she heard footsteps behind her.

Glancing over her shoulder, she saw the figure she had previously noticed following at a few yards' distance.

She would have paused and waited, but she dreaded the observation of her companion. So she simply walked faster, hurrying her aunt along.

They passed from the street, and still she heard the feet following behind her. At last they reached the gate of the minister's house.

Here Marjorie lingered, and glancing down the road, saw the figure pause and wait.

Mrs. Menteith pushed open the gate, hastened across the garden, and knocked at the door. In a moment the figure came up rapidly.

'Hush, mademoiselle!' said a familiar

voice in French; and simultaneously she felt a piece of paper pressed into her hand. She grasped it involuntarily, and before she could utter a word the figure flitted away.

Meantime the house door had opened.

'Marjorie!' cried Mrs. Menteith from the threshold.

Marjorie hastened in.

'What kept ye at the gate? and who was yon that passed?'

'A man—a gentleman.'

'Did he speak to you?'

Without replying, Marjorie passed in.

As soon as possible she hastened up to her own room, locked the door, and there with trembling fingers unfolded the paper, and read as follows:

'*I have something important to say to you. Meet me to-morrow at noon on the Edinburgh Road. Pray tell no one that you have received this, or that I am here.*

'LÉON CAUSSIDIÈRE.'

Marjorie sat down trembling with the paper in her lap. She read it again and again, and as she did so her wonder grew. What had brought her French teacher to Leith, and why had he appeared in so mysterious a manner?

She felt frightened and suspicious, yet she could not disguise from herself that the unexpected *rencontre* gave her a curious thrill of pleasure. He had come thither in pursuit of *her*, that was clear; and his request for a secret meeting, unknown to her friends, had a significance not to be mistaken.

Her first impulse was to inform her aunt of what had taken place. A little reflection, however, convinced her that this would be undesirable.

After all, she thought, she had no right to assume that Caussidière's message had not a perfectly innocent significance. Perhaps he had brought her news from home.

A little later, just before she retired to rest, she drew the curtain of her room and looked out. The moon was shining brightly, and a figure stood at the gate, gazing at the house. It was impossible to distinguish it very clearly, but she thought that she again recognised Caussidière.

Fluttering and flushing with a new fear, which was almost akin to a new delight, she went to bed; but before her eyes

were closed in slumber she had resolved to meet Caussidière at the appointed place next day.

It was not an easy task for Marjorie to keep her appointment on the following day; indeed, everything seemed to conspire to keep her at home. To begin with, the family were much later than usual; then it seemed to Marjorie that the prayers were unusually long; then Mr. Menteith had various little things for her to do; so that the hands of the clock wandered towards twelve before she was able to quit the house.

At last she was free, and with palpitating heart and trembling hands was speeding along the road to meet the Frenchman.

It was half-an-hour past the appointed

time when she neared the trysting-place, and she was beginning to wonder whether or not Monsieur Caussidière had grown weary and had gone away, when, to her relief, he emerged from some nook where he had been hiding, and stood before her. Yes, it was he, looking anxious and restless, but brightening up considerably at sight of her face.

Now that the meeting had really come about, Marjorie felt somewhat abashed at the thought of her own boldness. She paused in some confusion, and timidly held forth her hand; but the Frenchman strode boldly forward and, the place being lonely, took her in his arms.

'Marjorie, my Marjorie!' he murmured.

Both words and action took her so completely by surprise, that for a moment she

could do nothing but tremble passively in his embrace like a trembling, frightened child; then, recovering herself, she drew back, blushing and trembling.

'Monsieur—Monsieur Caussidière!' she cried.

The Frenchman looked at her strangely; he took her hand, and held it lovingly in both of his.

'Marjorie,' he said, 'my little friend! It seems, now that I have you by me, that I am born again. I have travelled all the way from Dumfries to see you; and do you know why?—because, my child, you have taught me to love you!'

Marjorie paused in her walk; she felt her heart throbbing painfully, and her cheeks burning like fire. She looked up at him in helpless amazement, but she did not speak.

'When you departed, Marjorie,' continued Caussidière, affectionately clasping the little hand which still lay passively in his, 'I felt as if all the light and sunshine had been withdrawn from the world, and I knew then that the face of my little friend had left such an image on my heart that I could not shake it away. I tried to fight against the feeling, but I could not. You have made me love you, my darling; and now I have come to ask you if you will be *my wife!*'

'Your wife, monsieur!'

Marjorie could say no more. It was the first time such a proposal had been made to her, and it fairly took away her breath. Did she love Monsieur Caussidière? She did not know. Several times while lying awake at night she had pondered over the

question, but she had never once thought of the possibility of becoming united to him. And now her feeling was one of amazement, that he, who was so accomplished and highly gifted, should deign to make such a proposition to Marjorie Annan—a little waif who had been born of the water and reared on the bread of charity.

She looked so helplessly perplexed that the Frenchman smiled.

'Well, Marjorie,' he said, 'of what are you thinking, *ma petite?*'

'I was wondering, monsieur, why you had spoken to me as you have done?'

For a moment the man's face clouded; then the shadow passed and he smiled again.

'Because I adore you, Marjorie,' he said.

Again the girl was silent, and the Frenchman pulled his moustaches with trembling fingers. Presently he stole a glance at her, and he saw that her face was irradiated with a look of dreamy pleasure. He paused before her and regained possession of her trembling hands.

'Marjorie,' he said, and as he spoke his voice grew very tender and vibrated through every nerve in the girl's frame, 'my little Marjorie, if you had been left to me, I don't think I should ever have spoken, but when you did go away I felt as if the last chance of happiness had been taken from me. So, I said, "I will go to my little girl, I will tell her of my loneliness, I will say to her I have given her my love, and I will ask for hers in return." Marjorie, *will* you give it me, my dear?'

She raised her eyes to his and answered softly:

'I like you very much, monsieur.'

'And you will marry me, Marjorie?'

'I—I don't know that.'

'Marjorie?'

'I mean, monsieur, I will tell Mr. Lorraine.'

'You will not!—you must not!'

'Monsieur!'

'Marjorie, do you not see what I mean? They are all against me, every one of them, and if they knew, they would take my little girl away. Marjorie, listen to me. You say you love me, and you *do* love me—I am sure of that; therefore I wish you to promise to marry me and say nothing to any soul.'

'To marry you in secret? Oh, I could not do that, monsieur!'

'Then you do not love me, Marjorie?'

'Indeed, it is not true. And Mr. Lorraine is like my father, and he loves me so much. I would not do anything to vex or hurt him, monsieur.'

For a moment the Frenchman's face was clouded, and he cast a most ominous look upon the girl; then all in a moment again the sunshine burst forth.

'You have a kind heart, Marjorie,' he said. 'It is like my little girl to talk so; but she is sensible, and will listen to me. Marjorie, don't think I want to harm you, or lead you to do wrong. I love you far too well, little one, and my only thought is how I can keep and cherish you all my life.'

It must not be supposed that Marjorie was altogether proof against such wooing

as this. She believed that the Frenchman was incapable of deceit, and though at first the proposal had given her a shock, she soon came to think, in listening to his persuasive voice, that she was the one to blame. He was so much wiser than she, and he knew so much more of the world; and he loved her so much that he would never counsel her amiss. Marjorie did not consent to his wish, for it is not in a moment that we can wipe away the deeply instilled prejudice of a lifetime, but she finally promised to think it over and see him again.

He walked with her to within a quarter of a mile of the clergyman's gate; then he left her.

During the rest of that day Marjorie went about in a sort of dream, and it was

not until she had gone to bed at night that she was able to think dispassionately of the interview. She reviewed all that he had said to her, and was astonished to find how little his proposal seemed to shock her. Of course she still held to her first opinion, that an open straightforward course of action would be the best. Besides, now that she knew that Caussidière loved her, she had an inexpressible longing to kneel at her dear father's feet and tell him of her great joy and happiness; but then came the dread of which Caussidière had spoken; the fear that Mr. Lorraine might refuse his consent and separate her from her lover for ever. There certainly was a possibility of this, and now that she was alone, Marjorie freely acknowledged the danger.

She herself had noticed that, though at first Mr. Lorraine had been kindly disposed to the Frenchman, yet that latterly his feeling seemed to have changed. Miss Hetherington's will, paramount in this as in all things, had made the clergyman take her view of the matter, and the Frenchman had suffered accordingly. But why were they all so prejudiced against him? What was his crime? Simply the most venial crime of all, that of being unfortunate! He was an exile, friendless, and poor, and so all doors were shut against him.

Marjorie saw, or thought she saw, the injustice of it all, and her affectionate little heart rose in revolt.

The next day she went to meet the Frenchman again. The moment he saw her face he knew that in leaving her

to reason out the problem he had done well.

She came forward with all the confidence of a child, and said:

'Monsieur Caussidière, since I love you, I will trust you with all my heart.'

Oh, the days which followed; the hours of blissful dreamy joy! Marjorie went every day to meet her lover—each day found her happier than she had been before.

He was good and kind, and her love for him increased; his reasoning seemed logical as well as pleasant, and it was beginning to take a firm hold of her accordingly.

What he might eventually have persuaded her to do it is difficult to imagine, but an event happened which for the time being saved her from precipitation.

She had left her lover one day, promising to think over his proposition of an immediate secret marriage, and give him her decision on the following morning.

She walked along the road with her head filled with the old and still perplexing problem, but the moment she reached her home all such thoughts were rudely driven from her head. She found Mrs. Menteith in the parlour crying bitterly. Mr. Menteith, pale and speechless, stood by her side with an open telegram in his hand.

'What is the matter?' asked Marjorie.

Taking the telegram from the minister's unresisting grasp, she read as follows:

'Send Marjorie home at once. Mr. Lorraine is dangerously ill.'

The girl sank with a low cry upon the

ground ; then with an effort she rose and cried :

'Let me go to him ; let me go home.'

Not once that night did Marjorie remember Caussidière or her appointment with him on the following day. Her one thought now was of Mr. Lorraine. She hurriedly collected together her few belongings, and that very night she left for home.

CHAPTER XVII.

TWO MARJORIES.

It was a raw, wet, windy night when Marjorie arrived at the railway station of Dumfries. Scarcely had the train reached the platform, when the figure of a young man leapt upon the footboard and looked in at the carriage window, while a familiar voice addressed her by name.

She looked round, as she stood reaching down some parcels and a small hand-bag from the net above her seat, and recognised John Sutherland.

'They have sent me to meet you,' he said, stretching out his hand. 'I have a dog-cart waiting outside the station to drive you down.'

She took the outreached hand eagerly, quite forgetful of the angry words with which they had last parted, and cried in a broken voice:

'Oh, Johnnie, is he better?'

The young man's face looked grave indeed as he replied:

'He is about the same. He is very weak, and has been asking for you. But come, let me look after your luggage, and then we'll hurry down.'

There were few passengers and little luggage by the train, and they found Marjorie's small leather trunk standing almost by itself on the platform. A porter

shouldered it, and, following him, they passed out of the station and found a solitary dog-cart waiting, with a ragged urchin at the horse's head. A few minutes later Marjorie and Sutherland were driving rapidly side by side through the dark and rain-washed streets of the town.

Then, while he held the reins and guided the animal—a fast-trotting country cob—Sutherland explained, in fragmentary sentences, all that had occurred.

On the previous Sunday, just after concluding his usual sermon, Mr. Lorraine had been seized by a curious faintness, consequent on a sharp spasm at the heart, and had with difficulty dismissed his congregation; then, tottering like a man deathstricken, he had passed into the vestry and fallen almost insensible into the arms of his clerk

and sexton. Presently he had recovered sufficiently to crawl, with Solomon's assistance, over to the manse; but on his arrival there the painful symptoms increased, and he was undressed and placed in bed. The village doctor, called in hurriedly, had first prescribed brandy and water, which the patient, staunch in his teetotalism, firmly refused to take; and, after some delay, the doctor had substituted a medicinal stimulant. During the night Mr. Lorraine had continued in great suffering, with frequent recurrence of the pectoral spasms. By the next morning, though incredibly weakened in the short space of time that had occurred since his first seizure, he seemed rather better.

But within the next twenty-four hours, the symptoms, ominous from the beginning,

became still more grave, and he alternated between sharp attacks of pain and periods of semi-stupor. Then, in the pauses of one of the attacks, he had first asked for Marjorie, for whom the telegram had been despatched at once.

Sobbing wildly, while the wind and rain smote her in the face, Marjorie listened and questioned. She was so young and inexperienced in sorrow, that even yet she did not realize the possibility of a mortal loss; and, indeed, Sutherland, anxious to spare her, made the picture he was drawing as little dark as possible.

It was a dreary drive; and Marjorie, through her tears, saw the dull lights of the town disappear, the houses and hedges glide darkly past her, till they came out upon the open country road, where the wind was

wild and unrestrained, and the rain fell in torrents. The horse, knowing the road blindfold, splashed swiftly down through the darkness.

To Sutherland, it was a sweet, though a mournful, experience. To feel the frail, beautiful form of the maid he loved trembling so close to him, to be so near to her with his affectionate protecting influence, to listen to her murmured inquiries, and to answer her with gentle words of comfort, seemed to make amends for much that was unhappy in the past. Again and again he felt the fond impulse to put his arm around her and soothe her with words of love; but he lacked the courage, and, indeed, he felt that to obtrude his affection at that moment would be profanation.

Meantime he felt almost happy. That

drive became memorable to him long afterwards, when darker days came, and he would gladly have prolonged it through the whole night.

But after little more than an hour it came to an end. Passing rapidly through the streets of the village, they at last drew up before the gate of the manse.

With an eager cry, half a sob, Marjorie leapt down.

'I'll put up the horse and come back,' cried Sutherland.

Marjorie scarcely heard, but, opening the gate, ran in across the garden, and knocked softly at the manse door, which was opened almost instantly by Mysie, the old serving woman.

The moment she saw Marjorie she put her finger on her lips.

Marjorie stepped in, and the door was softly closed. Mysie led the way into the study, where a lamp was dimly burning.

'Oh, Mysie, how is he now?'

The woman's hard world-worn face was sad beyond expression, and her eyes were red with weeping.

'Wheesht, Miss Marjorie,' she answered, 'speak low. A wee while syne he sank into a bit sleep. He's awfu' changed! I'm thinkin' he'll no last mony hoors langer.'

'Oh, Mysie!' sobbed the girl convulsively.

'Wheesht, or he may hear ye! Bide here a minute, and I'll creep ben and see if he has waukened.'

She stole from the room.

In a few moments she returned to the door and beckoned. Choking down her

emotion, Marjorie followed her without a word.

They crossed the lobby and entered the rudely furnished bedroom where Mr. Lorraine had slept so many years, and there, in the very bed where the little foundling had been placed that wintry night long ago, lay the minister—haggard, worn and ghastly, with all the look of a man that was sinking fast. His white hair was strewn upon the pillow, his cheeks were sunken and ashen pale, and his dim blue eyes looked at vacancy, while his thin hand fingered at the counterpane.

Marjorie crept closer, with bursting heart, and looked upon him. As she did so she became conscious of a movement at the foot of the bed. There, kneeling in silence, was old Solomon. He looked up with a face

almost as grey and stony as that of his master, but gave no other sign of recognition.

The minister rocked his head from side to side, and continued to pick the coverlet, muttering to himself:

'Marjorie! Marjorie, my doo! Aye, put the bairn in my arms—she has your own eyes, Marjorie, your own eyes o' heaven's blue. Solomon, my surplice! To-day's the christening. . . We'll call her Marjorie, after her mother. . . A bonnie name! A bonnie bairn! . . Bring the light, Solomon! . . She's wet and weary. We'll lay her down in the bed!'

At the mention of his name, Solomon rose like a gaunt spectre, and stood gazing desolately at his master. His eyes were wild and tearless, and he shook like a reed.

Marjorie drew nearer, till she stood close over the bed. The minister's eyes met hers, but showed no sign of recognition.

'Oh, Mr. Lorraine!' she sobbed. 'Do you not know me? It is Marjorie!'

He did not seem to hear.

'We were lass and lad—lass and lad. Solomon, my man, draw up your chair and light your pipe. Listen to the wind, Solomon—it's an awful night. Speak low, lest you waken the bairn—Marjorie's bairn. Is that Marjorie? Somebody's knocking at the door. Open, and let her in to the fire. Marjorie, my doo, what's that you're holding 'neath your shawl? Is it our bairn? You're wet, wet, and your face is like a dead woman's, and why do you moan and greet like that? I thought you were sleeping in the kirkyard. Aye, aye, I'm grey

and old—but you're young still, Marjorie; young and bonnie for evermore. Come closer, Marjorie! There, lean your head upon my breast.'

As he spoke he seemed to clasp some visionary form in his embrace, while his wan face wore an expression of ineffable tenderness and beauty. Sobbing as if her heart would break, Marjorie reached out her hand and took the right hand of the minister, which lay out upon the coverlet; then, overcome with emotion, she sank on her knees by the bedside.

There was a long silence, broken only by the sick man's feeble murmurs, which had now become almost inarticulate. Marjorie, with her face buried, prayed silently for the life of her guardian and benefactor.

Suddenly there was a low cry from Solomon.

Marjorie started up, and at the same moment Mr. Lorraine half raised himself on his elbow and looked wildly around him.

'Who's there?' he moaned—'Marjorie!'

And for the first time his eyes seemed fixed on hers in actual recognition.

'Yes, Mr. Lorraine! Oh, speak to me!'

He did not answer, but still gazed upon her with a beautiful smile. His hand was still in hers, and she felt it fluttering like a leaf. Suddenly the smile faded into a look of startled wonder and divine awe. He looked at Marjorie, but *through* her, as it were at something beyond.

'Marjorie!' he moaned, 'I'm coming!'

Alas! it was to another Marjorie, some shining presence unbeheld of other eyes,

that he addressed that last joyful cry. Scarcely had it left his lips than his jaw dropped convulsively, and he fell back upon his pillow dead.

* * * * *

When Marjorie came to herself—for in the pain and horror of that first experience of death she had fainted completely away—she found herself in the arms of Mysie, who tried to lead her from the room. She looked round, and there lay the minister white and cold, with Solomon bending over him and softly closing his eyes.

She uttered a wild cry, and rushed to the bedside.

'Tak' the bairn awa',' said Solomon in a low voice.

'Oh, Solomon, is he dead indeed?' she cried, weeping wildly.

'Aye, he's gane!' replied the sexton, in a voice hollow as the sound of the church-bell. 'Gane, and gane first!' he added, muttering to himself. 'Nae woman folk shall lay him oot. I hae sairved him leeving, and I'll sairve him deid. God rest ye, meenister! 'Twill soon be my turn—aye, aye, the sooner the better.'

At last Marjorie suffered herself to be led away. When she returned half-an-hour later, she found that all the last offices of death had been carefully and tenderly performed.

Washed, and dressed in a bedgown as white as snow, with his hair carefully combed and arranged, and his hands placed gently by his side, the minister lay, smiling as if asleep. On the coverlet lay the small household Bible which he had been

accustomed to use at home. In a chair by the bedside Solomon sat watching, still without a tear.

'Oh, Solomon, may I kiss him?' whispered Marjorie; and without waiting for a reply, she bent down and touched the marble cheek with her warm young lips.

Ah, that icy kiss of Death! The cold beyond all living coldness, the inexpressible and awful sense of hopeless, eternal chill! She shrank in terror, being only a child.

'Dinna greet, Marjorie!' said Solomon. 'Dae ye think, if he wasna ripe, he wad be gather'd? He was an auld, auld man —aulder than me, and I'm auld eneugh. Does he no look bonnie and at peace? He preached the Word o' God for nigh sixty

years; he'll never preach mair! He was a grand man and a grand preacher; I was prood to be his precentor and his servant. God rest his soul! Amen.'

The tone in which Solomon spoke was strangely monotonous and dreary, and he himself had almost the semblance of a dead man.

* * * * *

Let me draw a veil over the sorrow of that night, which was spent by poor Marjorie in uncontrollable grief. Sutherland, returning a little while after the minister's breath had gone, tried in vain to comfort her, but remained in or about the house till break of day.

Early next morning, Miss Hetherington, driving up to the manse door in her faded carriage, heard the sad news. She entered

in, looking grim and worn beyond measure, and looked at the dead man. Then she asked for Marjorie, and learned that she had retired to her room. As the lady returned to her carriage she saw young Sutherland standing at the gate.

'It's all o'er at last, then,' she said, 'and Marjorie Annan has lost her best friend. Try to comfort her, Johnnie, if ye can.'

'I'll do that, Miss Hetherington,' cried Sutherland eagerly.

'The old gang and the young come,' muttered the lady. 'She's alone now in the world, but I'm her friend still. When the funeral's o'er she must come to stay a while wi' me. Will ye tell her that?'

'Yes, if you wish it.'

'Aye, I wish it. Poor bairn! It's her first puff o' the ill wind o' sorrow; but when she's as old as me she'll ken there are things in this world far waur than *death*.'

So saying, she moved to her carriage, and entering it, was slowly driven away. With a deep sigh Sutherland crossed to the manse door, which he found open. Using his privilege of intimate friendship, he entered the hall. As he did so he heard voices from the bedroom behind; he approached on tip-toe and looked into the room.

There, decently laid out in the darkened chamber, lay the body of the minister; and by the bedside was Solomon Mucklebackit in whispered consultation with Hew Moffatt, the local grocer and

undertaker, who stood with measuring tape in hand.

'Let it be o' strang aik, Mister Hew, wi' brass-headed nails, but plain and decent like himsel'. Hae ye the measure? Line it wi' white sawtin, a' complete. Weel, weel, I wish I was lying beside him, and there was room for twa.'

'It was awful sudden, was it no?' said the undertaker. 'I didna ken that the meenister was ailing. . . . Six foot frae heid till foot. What age will I put on the plate, Solomon?'

'Seeventy year and seeven; and his name in fu'—the Rev. Sampson Lorraine.'

Here the eye of the sexton fell on Sutherland, who stood hesitating at the door.

'Come in, Johnnie Sutherland,' he said. 'Dinna stand glowering, but come ben. See, there he lies!'

Sutherland entered noiselessly, and stood reverently by the bed. Solomon approached his side, and joined him as he gazed at the dead man.

'In the midst o' life we are in death,' the sexton murmured. 'Did ye ever look on a bonnier corpse? As white and clean as a bairn, for his heart was pure. I'll dig his grave with my ain hands—nae ither man shall touch it. There's a peacefu' spot close to the vestry window, and he shall rest *there*. Maybe he'll no' be angry if I lea' a corner near for mysel'. I hae been his servant a' these years, and I'll be near him when I dee. He was a kindly man, and never prood.'

Deeply affected, Sutherland stole from the room and entered the adjoining study. Solomon followed him, and continued to talk, as if muttering dreamily to himself.

'The funeral will be on Saturday. I hae sent word already to his sister and her gudeman, and nae doot they'll be here; and there will be heaps o' the neebours, nae doot, to pay him the last respects. You'll be there yoursel'?'

'Of course,' answered Sutherland. 'How is Marjorie?'

'She's upstairs greetin' in her room—ye canna see her. A lassie's tears! They flow easy as water, and siccan tears are soon mended.'

'I am sure she loved him very much,' interposed Sutherland gently.

Solomon gazed grimly at the speaker, but made no reply. A few minutes later Sutherland left the dreary house.

* * * * *

The day of the funeral came. It broke bright and sunny, and long before the time fixed there was a goodly gathering round the churchyard gate, on the road, and in the little study, where the usual funeral bakemeats were spread for a few of the gentry.

Mrs. Menteith presided, having arrived with her husband on the previous day, and there were several clergymen from the surrounding districts. Miss Hetherington too had come over, and sat with her keen eyes fixed on Marjorie, who was pale and tolerably resigned.

Alas, that dismal last passage from the light of day to the gloom of the grave! Of all the company there, scarcely one save Marjorie showed any sign of abiding grief. As for Mrs. Menteith, the dead man's only kith and kin, she had lived in a world of gloom so long, and had known so much personal sorrow, that she seemed little changed, save for a few external signs of grief. Young Sutherland, who was present, seemed greatly moved, but if the truth must be spoken, his distress was more for the maiden he loved and *her* distress than for the pure sense of bereavement.

The church bell tolled, and the company passed slowly across to the churchyard behind the oaken coffin, borne on the shoulders of four men, one of whom was the faithful Solomon.

Then, when the coffin was set down in the church, Solomon took his place as clerk, while the Rev. Mr. Menteith, in the dismallest of voices, read the funeral service. Marjorie, sitting by the side of Mrs. Menteith, sobbed as if her heart must break.

Out into the still kirkyard, where the sun was brightly shining, and up to the verge of the open grave, which Solomon had dug, as he had sworn to do, with his own hands. Then 'ashes to ashes; dust to dust.' As he sprinkled the first clay on the hard wood of the coffin, and looked down into the dark grave where it was lying, Solomon's tears flowed feebly for the first time.

'Oh, meenister, meenister!' he moaned; 'why did ye gang first, and lea' me lingering behind?'

When the cold earth fell into the grave, Marjorie uttered a low cry, and turned convulsively away. As she did so, she saw Caussidière, dressed in complete black, standing at a little distance, with his sad eyes fixed on hers.

CHAPTER XVIII.

'THE WOOING O'T!'

THE few days which followed immediately upon the clergyman's funeral were the most wretched Marjorie had ever spent. Habited in her plain black dress, she sat at home in the little parlour watching with weary, wistful eyes the figures of Solomon and Mysie, who, similarly clad, moved like ghosts about her; and all the while her thoughts were with the good old man, who, after all, had been her only protector in the world.

While he had been there to cheer and comfort her, she had never realized how far these others were from her. Now she knew; she was as one left utterly alone.

It was by her own wish that she remained at the manse. Mrs. Menteith, obliged after the funeral to return to her home, had offered to take Marjorie with her, and Miss Hetherington had sent a little note requesting her to make the Castle her home. Both of these invitations Marjorie refused.

To go to Edinburgh would take her too far from her beloved dead, while the thought of living with Miss Hetherington at Annandale Castle positively appalled her. So she said 'No.'

The lady of the Castle received the refusal kindly, saying, that although Marjorie could not take up her residence at the

Castle, she must not altogether avoid it.

'Come when you wish, my bairn,' concluded the old lady. 'You'll aye be welcome. We are both lonely women now, and must comfort one another.'

During the first few days, however, Marjorie did not go. She sat at home during the day, and in the dusk of the evening, when she believed no one would see her, she went forth to visit the churchyard and cry beside her foster-father's grave. At length, however, she remembered the old lady's kindly words, and putting on her bonnet and a thick veil, she one morning set out on a visit to Annandale Castle.

Marjorie had not seen Miss Hetherington since that day she came down to the funeral; when, therefore, she was shown into

the lady's presence, she almost uttered a frightened cry. There sat the grim mistress of the Castle in state, but looking as worn and faded as her faded surroundings. Her face was pinched and worn as if with heart-eating grief or mortal disease. She received the girl fondly, yet with something of her old imperious manner; and during the interview she renewed the offer of protection.

But Marjorie, after looking at the dreary room and its strange mistress, gave a most decided negative.

'I'd better stay at home,' she said.

'Ye silly bairn, you cannot aye bide at the manse,' returned the lady; 'if the house is aye to be in the possession of that daft Solomon and you, where do you mean to put the new minister that's coming to Annandale?'

Marjorie did not answer.

To tell the truth, this was a phase of the situation which had never once entered her mind. She had thought in a vague sort of way that she would remain at the manse, and that was all.

But now her eyes were opened. She knew that a new minister would be needed, and the manse was his proper home. Solomon in all probability would retain his place as sexton, but assuredly she would be compelled to go.

She remained with Miss Hetherington only a short time, and when she left the Castle, her mind was so full of solicitude, that she walked along utterly oblivious to everything about her. Suddenly she started and uttered a glad cry of surprise. A man had touched her on the shoulder,

and, lifting her eyes, she beheld her lover.

The Frenchman was dressed as she last had seen him, in plain black; his face was pale and troubled. Marjorie, feeling that new sense of desolation upon her, drew near to his side.

'Ah, monsieur,' she said, 'you have come —at last.'

Caussidière did not embrace her, but held her hands and patted them fondly, while Marjorie, feeling comforted by his very presence, allowed her tears to flow unrestrainedly. He let her cry for a time, then he placed her hand upon his arm and walked with her slowly in the direction of the manse.

'My Marjorie,' he said, 'my own dear love! this has been a sore trial to you,

but you have borne it bravely. I have seen you suffer, and I have suffered too.'

'You have seen, monsieur?'

'Yes, Marjorie. Did you think because I was silent I had forgotten? Ah, no, my love. I have watched over you always. I have seen you go forth at night and cry as if your little heart would break. But I have said nothing, because I thought "Such grief is sacred. I must watch and wait," and I have waited.'

'Yes, monsieur?'

'But to-day, Marjorie, when I saw you come from the Castle with your face all troubled—ah, so troubled, my Marjorie!—I thought, "I can wait no longer: my little one needs me; she will tell me her grief, and now in her hour of need I will help her." So I have come, Marjorie, and my

little one will confide all her sorrows to me.'

Then the child in her helplessness clung to him; for he loved her and sympathized with her; and she told him the full extent of her own desolation.

The Frenchman listened attentively while she spoke. When she ceased he clasped her hands more fervently than before, and said:

'Marjorie, come to *my* home!'

She started, and drew her hands away. She knew what more he would say, and it seemed to her sacrilege, when the clergyman had been so recently laid in his grave. The Frenchman, gathering from her face the state of her mind, continued prosaically enough:

'I know it is not a time to talk of love,

Marjorie; but it *is* a time to talk of marriage! When you were in Edinburgh you gave me your promise; and you said you loved me. I ask you now, fulfil your promise; let us become man and wife!'

'You wish me to marry you *now*, monsieur?'

'Ah, yes, Marjorie.'

'Although I am a penniless, friendless, homeless lass?'

'What is that to me, my dear? I love you, and I wish you to be my wife.'

'You are very good.'

'Marjorie?'

'Yes.'

'Tell me; when will you make me the happiest man alive?'

Marjorie looked at her black dress, and her eyes filled with tears.

'I do not know—I cannot tell,' she said. 'Not yet.'

'*Eh bien!*—but it must not be long delayed. The decrees of destiny hurry us onward. You will soon be thrust from the manse, as you say, while I must return to France.'

'You are going away!'

'Most assuredly I must soon go. My future is brightening before me, and I am glad—thank Heaven!—there are few dark clouds looming ahead to sadden our existence, my child. The tyrant who desecrates France will one day fall; meantime his advisers have persuaded him to pardon many political offenders, myself amongst them. So I shall see France again! God is good! When He restores me to my country, He will give me also my wife.'

He paused, and Marjorie was silent. Was it all real, or only a dream? It seemed so strange that she, plain little Marjorie Annan, should marry a gentleman like Monsieur Caussidière, and go away to lead a life of fairy-like happiness in France. Already the old, peaceful life by Annan Water seemed to be fading away, while that other life rising before her showed as yet no dark spot upon its shining face.

And yet Marjorie felt afraid; perhaps even then a faint feeling of what was before her made her shrink a little from entering that strange land unprotected and almost alone. Caussidière felt her hand tremble as it lay upon his arm; he looked at her, and he saw that her eyes were again full of tears.

'Marjorie,' he said, 'what is it?'

The girl hastily brushed away her tears and choked down the sobs which were rising in her throat.

'I don't know,' she said; 'but I feel so sad. Oh, monsieur, if I go with you, I leave my home and everyone who cares for me in the world!'

For a moment the Frenchman's face was by no means pleasant to behold. He pulled his moustache, brought down his brows, and opened his lips to say something, when suddenly the impulse passed away, and he addressed her more lovingly than ever.

'It is your kind heart, my child,' he said, 'which makes you say so much. Your home, what is it? A house which you will soon be turned from. Your friends, who are they? At the head of them stands

Miss Hetherington, a selfish woman, who would sacrifice you to her own iron, headstrong temper, and, if you dared gainsay her, would have sufficient strength of will to see you starving in the streets without much pity. Then there is Solomon, the sexton, and Mysie, the servant at the manse. What would they do for you, Marjorie? while I, whom you fear, would willingly make you my wife, and give you a happy future.'

'Ah, monsieur, I do not fear you, but——'

'Then prove it, Marjorie; put your little hand in mine, and say, "Léon, I trust you with all my heart." Say it, my child, and, believe me, your faith shall not be misplaced.'

He held forth his hand to her, and

Marjorie, tremblingly raising her eyes to his face, said in broken accents, 'I do trust you.' So a second time the troth was plighted, and, whether for good or ill, Marjorie's fate was sealed.

Every day after this she met the Frenchman, and at each of these interviews his influence over her seemed to increase. Having got her thus far into his power, he easily persuaded her to keep their relations private, and to consent to a secret marriage. It certainly seemed strange to Marjorie that he should wish this, but after a little reflection, she persuaded herself that, after all, he might be right. Now that the minister was gone, where was the sympathetic soul in whom she could confide? There was absolutely no one. So Marjorie, having been drawn

on and on, quite unconscious, poor child, of the meshes of the net which were being laid so cunningly about her, had already begun to recover from her first sharp sense of desolation.

The prospect of a secret marriage was the only thing that troubled her, and here her fears were soon lulled at rest. After all, what was there to daunt her? Caussidière had proposed nothing dishonourable; she loved him better than anyone she had met; so where was the harm in marrying him? Then, again, he had held out hopes to her which made her heart very glad. She must go to France with him as his wife. He wished to show her his home, he said, and to make her known to all his dear relations. Then, after a while, she would come back again; he would bring her to

Annandale to revisit her old home and her old friends. How proud they would all be of her; and they would then assuredly open their hearts to him, for he would show them how little he had deserved their coldness and mistrust!

Having got her thus far under his influence, Caussidière began to press on the marriage. His plan was clear. He would obtain a special license, armed with which he would disappear from Annandale to take up his abode for the necessary period in the place fixed upon by him for the marriage ceremony to take place.

At first Marjorie shrank from this, as she had done from his other proposals; but after a while she consented. Caussidière, however, was by no means easy in his mind. Perceiving well enough that the maiden

was acting more under his will than her own, he feared that, if left to herself, her courage at the last moment might fail her. He, therefore, generously volunteered to come back to Annandale to fetch her.

'I must take care of you *now*,' he said, as they stood together near the manse gate. 'Marjorie, my darling,' he added, lifting her face and kissing it—'Marjorie, my little love, only a very few days now, and you will be my wife.'

CHAPTER XIX.

A LITTLE CHEQUE.

THE day following her final promise to Caussidière, Marjorie received intimation that the new minister was coming without delay to take possession of the living. Her informant was Solomon Mucklebackit, whose funereal despair was tempered with a certain lofty scorn.

'He's frae the Hielan's beyond Glasgow, and a callant scarce thirty years o' age. Freeland they ca' him, and he has a wife

and a hoosefu' o' weans. That I should leeve to see a hen-peckit upstart preachin' in oor poopit, and a flock o' red-heided Hielan' bairns screechin' in oor hoose! It's enough to gar the meenister—God rest him! —rise in his grave!'

'When will they come, Solomon?' cried Marjorie, her eyes full of tears.

'He's coming himsel' first, to preach next Sabbath, and he's to hae the meenister's ain bed in the manse. We're here on sufferance noo, you ken, and directly the sale is owre——'

Marjorie turned away sobbing. The break-up of her household gods was nearly complete; for under Mr. Menteith's instructions, the few goods and chattels were already announced to be disposed of by public roup. As to the general state of

Mr. Lorraine's worldly affairs, Marjorie as yet knew little or nothing; but she had heard and seen quite enough to be aware that he died, as he had lived, a very poor man.

The next day, which was a Thursday, the Rev. Mr. Menteith arrived from Edinburgh, and summoned Marjorie to an interview in the little study. When she appeared his gloomy face was not unkindly, and he took her hand and kissed her on the forehead with almost paternal gentleness.

'I have had a letter from Mr. Freeland,' he exclaimed, 'and he wishes to take possession directly the sale is over. Have you thought again over Mistress Menteith's proposal that you should bide, for a time at least, as a member of our family?'

Yes, Marjorie had thought of it; but she begged, with many sobs and tears, to remain where she was.

'That, my child, is impossible,' responded Mr. Menteith. 'This place is no longer your home, and you are o'er young to dwell by yourself. There is a little money—about a hundred and twenty pounds, besides the produce of the sale, which will amount, say, to fifty more; and though Mr. Lorraine has left no will, Mistress Menteith and myself are agreed to lay out this sum for your benefit. Such a trifle, however, if placed out at interest, would scarcely keep you in porridge and milk, and if you lived upon the principal, it would be gone directly. If you will come to us, you will be welcome, and the money shall be your portion when you marry.'

The proposal was a kind one, and under other circumstances Marjorie would have accepted it with a grateful heart; but she remembered her promise to Caussidière, who seemed indeed the only real refuge in her desolation.

'Please give me time to think it over,' said Marjorie sadly. 'I can't realize it all yet, Mr. Menteith.' She added, almost as if to herself, 'Miss Hetherington has offered me a home as well as you.'

Mr. Menteith opened his eyes. Although a pious man, he was not without his reverence for the aristocracy of this world.

'At the Castle, Marjorie? To reside with her temporarily or as a guest?'

'As long as I like, Mr. Menteith. She has been kind to me ever since I was a

bairn, and she would like me to live with her altogether.'

'Then of course you will go? Nay, don't think I shall blame you for preferring Miss Hetherington's protection to the shelter of our humble home.'

But Marjorie shook her head.

'I would rather go to Edinburgh with *you* than stay *there*,' she answered. 'I cannot thole the dreary place; and Miss Hetherington, though she is so kind, is very strange. Often, Mr. Menteith, I think she is not quite in her right mind. Whiles she is kind to me, and greets over me, and is very tender; but whiles she changes, and scolds, and storms, till I'm in dread to look her in the face. I am sure I could never bide up at the Castle.'

'Well, we shall see,' muttered Mr.

Menteith rather irritably; and so the conversation ended.

On the following Saturday arrived the new minister, prepared to officiate for the first time in the parish. He was, as Solomon had predicted, a youngish man, with red hair and beard, and very pink complexion; but his manners were unassuming and good-natured. His wife and family, he explained, were to follow him in about ten days; and in the meantime his furniture and other chattels were coming on by train. Shown over the manse by Solomon, he expressed no little astonishment at finding only two or three rooms furnished, and these very barely.

'Mr. Lorraine never married?' he inquired, as they passed from room to room.

'The meenister was a wise man,' replied

Solomon ambiguously. 'He lived and he dee'd in single sanctity, according to the holy commandment o' the Apostle Paul.'

'Just so,' said Mr. Freeland, with a smile. 'Well, I shall find the manse small enough for my belongings. Mistress Freeland has been used to a large house, and we shall need every room. The chamber facing the river, upstairs, will make an excellent nursery.'

'My ain bedroom!' muttered Solomon. 'Weel, weel, I'm better oot o' the house.'

At the service on the following day there was a large attendance to welcome the new minister. Solomon occupied his usual place as precentor, and his face, as Mr. Freeland officiated above him, was a study in its expression of mingled scorn, humiliation, and despair. But the minister had

a resonant voice, and a manner of thumping the cushion which carried conviction to the hearts of all unprejudiced observers. The general verdict upon him, when the service was over, was that he was the right man in the right place, and 'a grand preacher.'

The congregation slowly cleared away, while Marjorie, lingering behind, walked sadly to the grave of her old foster-father, and stood looking upon it through fastly falling tears. So rapt was she in her own sorrow, that she did not hear a footstep behind her, and not till Caussidière had come up and taken her by the hand was she aware of his presence.

'So the change has come at last, my Marjorie,' he said. 'Was I not right? This place is no longer a home for you.'

'Monsieur!'

'Call me Léon. Shall we not soon be man and wife?'

But Marjorie only sobbed.

'He was so good. He was my first, my only friend!'

'Peace be with him,' returned the Frenchman tenderly. 'He loved you dearly, *mignonne*, and I knew his only wish would be to see you happy. Look what I hold in my hand. A charm—a talisman—*parbleu*, it is like the wonderful lamp of Aladdin, which will carry us, as soon as you will, hundreds of miles away.'

As he spoke he drew forth a folded paper and smilingly held it before her.

'What is it, monsieur?' she asked, perplexed.

'No; you must call me Léon—then I will tell you.'

'What is it—Léon?'

'The special license, Marjorie, which permits us to marry when and where we will.'

Marjorie started and trembled, then she looked wildly at the grave.

'Not yet,' she murmured. 'Do not ask me yet!'

He glanced round—no one was near—so with a quick movement he drew her to him, and kissed her fondly on the lips.

'You have no home now,' he cried; 'strangers come to displace you, to turn you out into the cold world. But you have one who loves you a thousand times better for your sorrow and your poverty—ah, yes, I know you are poor!—and who will be your loving protector till the end.'

She looked at him in wonder. Ah, how good and kind he was! Knowing her miserable birth, seeing her friendless and almost castaway, he would still be beside her, to comfort and cherish her with his deep affection. If she had ever doubted his sincerity, could she doubt *now?*

* * * * *

Half-an-hour later Caussidière was walking rapidly in the direction of Annandale Castle. He looked supremely self-satisfied and happy, and hummed a light French air as he went.

Arriving at the door, he knocked, and the old serving-woman appeared in answer to the summons.

'Miss Hetherington, if you please.'

'You canna see her,' was the sharp reply. 'What's your beesiness?'

'Give her this card, if you please, and tell her I *must* see her without delay.'

After some hesitation the woman carried the card away, first shutting the door unceremoniously in the visitor's face. Presently the door opened again, and the woman beckoned him in.

He followed her along the gloomy lobbies, and upstairs, till they reached the desolate boudoir which he had entered on a former occasion.

The woman knocked.

'Come in,' said the voice of her mistress.

Caussidière entered the chamber, and found Miss Hetherington, wrapped in an old-fashioned morning gown, seated in an armchair at her escritoire. Parchments, loose papers, and packets of old letters lay scattered before her. She wheeled her

chair sharply round as he entered, and fixed her eyes upon the Frenchman's face. She looked inexpressibly wild and ghastly, but her features wore an expression of indomitable resolution.

Caussidière bowed politely, then, turning softly, closed the door.

'What brings you here?' demanded the lady of the Castle.

'I wished to see you, my lady,' he returned. 'First, let me trust that you are better, and apologize for having disturbed you on such a day.'

Miss Hetherington knitted her brows, and pointed with tremulous forefinger to a chair.

'Sit down,' she said.

Caussidière obeyed her, and sat down, hat in hand. There was a pause, broken

at last by the lady's quick, querulous voice.

'Weel, speak! Have you lost your tongue, man? What's your will with *me?*'

Caussidière replied with extreme suavity:

'I am anxious, my lady, that all misunderstanding should cease between us. Much as you distrust me, I feel for you the greatest sympathy and respect—ah, yes!—and I wish we could be friends.'

'Friends?' echoed the lady incredulously.

'Why not? You are a lady of wealth and stainless reputation; I am a gentleman and a man of honour. I have accidentally become acquainted with circumstances which are unknown to the rest of the world; but, believe me, the knowledge is safe in my keeping, and you may rely on my discretion. Why, then, should you regard me

with suspicion, and refuse the offer of my sympathy and my poor service?'

Curiously enough, even this conciliatory style of address had little or no effect upon the listener, who still kept her dark eyes fixed upon the speaker, and nodded her head grimly in time to his well-rounded periods.

'Gang on,' she said, as he paused smiling; 'you're not finished yet.'

'Not quite; and yet I have little to say that you have not heard before. The sad event which has just occurred has only confirmed me, madame, in my wish to win your confidence. To prove my sincerity, I will give you a piece of news. I have asked Miss Annan to marry me, and with your consent she is quite willing.'

'What!' cried Miss Hetherington, half-

rising from her chair, and then sinking back with a gasp and a moan. 'Have ye dared?'

Caussidière gently inclined his head.

'And Marjorie—*she* has dared to accept ye, without warning me?'

'Pardon me, she is not aware that you have any *right* to be consulted. I, however, who acknowledge your right, have come in her name to solicit your kind approbation.'

'And what do you threaten, man, if I say "no, no"—a hundred times no?'

Caussidière shrugged his shoulders.

'*Parbleu,* I threaten nothing; I am a gentleman, as I have told you. But should you put obstacles in my way, it may be unpleasant for all concerned.'

Miss Hetherington rose to her feet, livid

with rage, and shook her two extended hands in her tormentor's face.

'It's weel for you I'm no a man! If I were a man, ye should never pass that door again living! I defy ye—I scorn ye! Ye coward, to come here and molest a sick woman!'

She tottered as she spoke, and fell back into her chair.

'You are very unjust, my lady,' answered the Frenchman. 'Believe me, I am your friend.'

She lay back moaning for some seconds; then, struck by a new thought, she looked up wearily.

'I see how it is! You want money!'

'I am not a rich man, madame,' answered Caussidière, smiling.

'If I give you a hundred pounds will you

leave this place, and never let me see your face again?'

Caussidière mused.

'One hundred pounds. It is not much.'

'Two hundred,' exclaimed the lady eagerly.

'Two hundred is better, but still not much. With two hundred pounds—and fifty—I might even deny myself the pleasure of your charming acquaintance.'

Miss Hetherington turned towards her desk, and reached her trembling hand towards her cheque-book, which lay there ready.

'If I give you two hundred and fifty pounds will you do as I bid ye? Leave this place for ever, and speak no

word of what has passed to Marjorie Annan?'

'Yes,' said Caussidière, 'I think I can promise *that*.'

Quickly and nervously Miss Hethering-ton filled up a cheque.

'Please do not cross it,' suggested Caus-sidière. 'I will draw the money at your banker's in Dumfries.'

The lady tore off the cheque, but still hesitated.

'Can I trust ye?' she muttered. 'I knew it was siller ye sought, and not the lassie, but——'

'You may rely upon my promise that I shall return forthwith to France, where a great political career lies open before me.'

'Will you put it down in writing?'

'It is needless. I have given you my word. Besides, madame, it is better that such arrangements as these should not be written in black and white. Papers may fall into strange hands, as you are aware, and the result might be unfortunate—for *you.*'

She shuddered and groaned as he spoke, and forthwith handed him the cheque. He glanced at it, folded it up, and put it in his waistcoat-pocket. Then he rose to go.

'As I informed you before,' he said, 'you have nothing to fear from me. My only wish is to secure your good esteem.'

'When will you gang?' demanded Miss Hetherington.

'In the course of the next few days.

'I have some little arrangement, a few bills to settle, and then—*en route* for France.'

He bowed again, and gracefully retired. Passing downstairs and out at the front door, he again hummed gaily to himself. As he strolled down the avenue he drew forth the cheque and inspected it again.

'Two hundred and fifty pounds!' he said, laughing. 'How good of her, how liberal, to pay our travelling expenses!'

Meantime, Miss Hetherington sat in her gloomy boudoir, looking the picture of misery and despair. Her eyes worked wildly, her lips trembled convulsively.

'Oh, Hugh, my brother Hugh!' she cried, wringing her hands; 'if ye were living, to take this scoundrel by the throat! . . . Will he keep his word?

Maybe I was mad to trust him! I must wait and wait till he's awa'. I'll send down for the bairn this day! She's safer here with me!'

CHAPTER XX.

FLYING SOUTH.

IMMEDIATELY after his interview with Miss Hetherington, Caussidière disappeared from the neighbourhood for some days; a fact which caused Marjorie little or no concern, as she had her own suspicion as to the cause of his absence. Her heart was greatly troubled, for she could not shake off the sense of the deception she was practising on those most interested in her welfare. Again and again, in the privacy of her own

chamber, she knelt and prayed for help and advice from the spirit of her dead foster-father. Ah, if he had only been alive to guide her! Bitterly now did she reproach herself that she had not told him everything, and confided in his love and sympathy.

There was no one to take his place. Mr. Menteith was kind but antipathetic; she dared not tell him the whole truth. As for Solomon, such confidences as she had with Mr. Lorraine were impossible with *him*. Since his master's death he had grown gloomier and more irritable than ever; and even her tender approaches to some affectionate understanding were disregarded or misunderstood. Poor Solomon was wandering like a haunted creature in the shadow of the grave.

Her only other friend was Miss Hetherington, and for *her* she still felt the old awe and timidity. She feared her violent bursts of temper and her general severity of disposition. No; there was no safe guide and comforter left, now the good old minister was gone.

While she was waiting and debating, she received a visit from the lady of the Castle, who drove down post-haste, and stalked into the manse full of evident determination. Marjorie was sent for at once, and, coming downstairs, found Miss Hetherington and Mr. Menteith waiting for her in the study.

'It's all settled, Marjorie,' said the impulsive lady. 'You're to come home with me to the Castle this very day.'

Marjorie started in astonishment, but

before she could make any reply, Mr. Menteith interposed.

'You cannot do better, my child, than accept Miss Hetherington's most generous invitation. The day after to-morrow, as you are aware, the sale will take place, and this will be no longer your home. Miss Hetherington is good enough to offer you a shelter until such time as we can decide about your future mode of life.'

'Just so,' said the lady decisively. 'Pack your things, and come awa' with me in the carriage.'

'I cannot come,' replied Marjorie; 'at least not to-day. Oh! Mr. Menteith, let me stop in the manse till they turn me out, and then——'

She paused, weeping and hiding her face in her hands.

'Marjorie, Marjorie,' murmured Miss Hetherington, not unkindly, 'when will ye learn sense, my bairn? It's useless greeting for the dead. The silly old man that's gone has taught you naething o' the ways o' the world.'

'Do not say a word against him!' cried Marjorie, with sudden indignation, uncovering her face, while her eyes flashed through her tears. 'Oh! he was good and wise—I'll never hear him miscalled.'

'Hush, Marjorie!' interposed Mr. Menteith.

'Let the lassie speak her mind,' cried Miss Hetherington; 'it's better to flyte than to fret, and I'm glad she has a woman's spirit. But, Marjorie, I'm not miscalling him that's gone, for all the world kens he was a decent, God-fearing man. All I want

you to understand is that greeting will never bring him back, and that my house is your home when you like to come.'

'I know you are very kind,' returned Marjorie, 'and maybe you'll be thinking I'm ungrateful. Mr. Lorraine always said you were my best friend. But I cannot come with you to-day.'

'*When* will you come?' demanded the lady.

'Give me time, please,' pleaded Marjorie; 'in a day or two, maybe—after the sale. I should like to stay till I can stay no more.'

So it was settled, to Marjorie's great relief; and Mr. Menteith led the great lady back to her carriage. As they crossed the garden Miss Hetherington said, leaning on the minister's arm:

'Watch her weel, if you please, till she comes to me, and if you see that foreign scoundrel in her company, let me ken.'

Mr. Menteith looked astonished, for he had neither heard nor seen anything of the Frenchman. In answer to his hurried queries, Miss Hetherington rapidly explained the state of affairs, saying nothing, of course, of her own relations with Caussidière. She seemed greatly relieved when the minister informed her that Marjorie spent the greater part of each day in her own room, only creeping out now and then to walk in the churchyard.

'Maybe the man has gone awa',' she muttered; 'maybe he is not so eager to woo a lassie without a tocher. But should you see him in the neighbourhood, be sure to send to me.'

The minister promised, and the lady drove away.

At sunset that day, as Marjorie left the manse and crossed over to the old churchyard, she was accosted by John Sutherland, who had been waiting at the gate some time in expectation of her appearance. She gave him her hand sadly, and they stood together talking in the road.

'They tell me you are going to stop at the Castle. Is that so, Marjorie?'

'I'm not sure; maybe.'

'If you go, may I come to see you there? I shan't be long in Annandale. In a few weeks I am going back to London.'

He paused as if expecting her to make some remark; but she did not speak, and her thoughts seemed far away.

'Marjorie,' he continued, 'I wish I could

say something to comfort you in your trouble, for though my heart is full I can hardly find my tongue. It seems as if all the old life was breaking up under our feet and carrying us far asunder. For the sake of old times we shall be friends still, shall we not?'

'Yes, Johnnie, of course,' was the reply. 'You've aye been very good to me.'

'Because I loved you, Marjorie! Ah, don't be angry—don't turn away—for I'm not going to presume again upon our old acquaintance. But, now that Death has come our way, and all the future seems clouding, I want to say just this—that come what may, I shall never change. I'm not asking you to care for me—I'm not begging you this time to give me what you've maybe given to another man; but I

want you to be sure, whatever happens, that you've one faithful friend at least in the world who would die to serve you, for the sake of what you were to him lang syne.'

The words were so gentle, the tone so low and tender, the manner of the man so full of melancholy sympathy and respect, that Marjorie was deeply touched.

'Oh, Johnnie,' she said, 'you know I have always loved you—always trusted you, as if you were my brother.'

'As your brother, then, let it be,' answered Sutherland sadly. 'I don't care what title it is, so long as it gives me the right to watch over you.'

To this Marjorie said nothing. She continued to walk quietly onward, and Sutherland kept by her side. Thus they passed together through the churchyard and came

to the spot where Mr. Lorraine was at rest. Here she fell upon her knees and quietly kissed the grave.

Had Sutherland been less moved by his own grief, he might have noticed something strange in the girl's manner, for she kissed the ground almost passionately, and murmured between her sobs, 'Good-bye, good-bye!'

She was recalled to herself by Sutherland's voice.

'Don't cry, Marjorie,' he said.

'Ah, I can't help it,' she sobbed. 'You are all so good to me—far better than I deserve.'

'Don't say that, Marjorie; you've always been a good lassie and a bonnie, and so you've won your way into all hearts. I'm not denying that I should have been better

pleased if you could have looked more kindly on me; but it's no fault of yours, Marjorie. You are a good lassie, and though I know well enough you'll give to some other man the heart that I've been hungering for, I shall love you till my dying day.'

They left the churchyard together, and wandered back to the manse gate. When they paused again, Sutherland took her hand and kissed it.

'Good-bye, Johnnie.'

'No, not good-bye. I may come and see you again, Marjorie, mayn't I, before I go away?'

'Yes,' she returned, 'if—if you like.'

'And Marjorie, maybe the next time there'll be folk by, so that we cannot speak. I want you to promise me one thing before we part this night.'

'What do you wish?' said Marjorie, shrinking half fearfully away.

'Only this, that as you've given me a sister's love, you'll give me also a sister's trust. I want to think when I'm away in the great city that if you were in trouble you'd send right away to me. Just think always, Marjorie, that I'm your brother, and be sure there isn't a thing in this world I wouldn't do for you.'

He paused, but Marjorie did not answer; she felt she could not speak. The unselfish devotion of the young man touched her more than any of his ardent love-making had done.

Perhaps she was thinking what a peaceful life hers might have been if she had been able to give him the love which he sought; but alas! we cannot command our affections,

and possibly young Sutherland's love-suit might not have been more prosperous even if the Frenchman had never come to Annandale.

'Marjorie, *will* you promise me——?'

'Promise what?'

'To send to me if you're in trouble—to let me be your brother indeed.'

She hesitated for a moment; then she gave him her hand.

'Yes, Johnnie, I promise,' she said. 'Good-bye.'

'No; good-night, Marjorie.'

'Good-night,' she repeated, as she left his side and entered the manse.

About ten o'clock that night, when all the inmates of the manse had retired to rest, and Marjorie was in her room about to prepare for bed, she was startled by hearing a sharp

shrill whistle just beneath her window. She started, trembling, sat on the side of her bed, and listened.

In a few minutes the sound was repeated. This time she ran to the window, opened it, and put out her head.

'Who is it?' she asked softly. 'Is anyone there?'

At the sound of her voice a figure advanced from the shadow of the wall, and a voice answered her.

'Yés, Marjorie. It is I, Léon; come down!'

Trembling more and more, Marjorie hurriedly closed the window, wrapped a shawl about her head and shoulders, and noiselessly descended the stairs. The next minute she was in the Frenchman's arms. He clasped her fervently to him. He kissed her again and again as he said:

'To-morrow night, Marjorie, you will come to me.'

The girl half shrank away as she said:

'So soon—ah, no!'

'It is not too soon for me, little one,' returned the Frenchman gallantly, 'for I love you—ah! so much, Marjorie, and every hour seems to me a day. Listen, then: You will retire to bed to-morrow night in the usual way. When all the house is quiet, and everyone asleep, you will wrap yourself up in your travelling cloak and come down. You will find me waiting for you here. Do you understand me, Marjorie?'

'Yes, monsieur, I understand, but——'

'But what, my love?'

'I was thinking of my things. How shall I get them away?'

'*Parbleu!*—there must be no luggage.

You must leave it all behind, and bring nothing but your own sweet self.'

'But,' continued Marjorie, 'I must have some clothes to change.'

'Most certainly; you shall have just as many as you wish, my little love. But we will leave the old attire, as we leave the old life, behind us. I am not a poor man, Marjorie; and when you are my wife, all mine will be all yours also. You shall have as much money as you please to buy what you will. Only bring me your own sweet self, Marjorie—that will be enough.'

With such flattery as this the Frenchman dazzled her senses until long past midnight; then, after she had made many efforts to get away, he allowed her to return to the house.

During that night Marjorie slept very little; the next day she was pale and dis-

traught. She wandered about the house in melancholy fashion; she went up to the churchyard several times, and sat for hours beside her foster-father's grave. She even cast regretful looks towards Annandale Castle; and her eyes were constantly filled with tears.

At length it was all over. The day was spent; the whole household had retired; and Marjorie sat in her room alone. Her head was ringing, her eyes burning, and her whole body trembling with mingled fear and grief—grief for the loss of those whom she must leave behind—fear for that unknown future into which she was about to plunge. She sat for a minute or so on the bed trying to collect her thoughts; then she wrote a few hurried lines, which she sealed and left on her dressing-table.

After that was done, she looked over her things, and collected together one or two trifles—little mementoes of the past, which had been given to her by those she held most dear, and which were doubly precious to her now that she was going away. She lingered so long and so lovingly over these treasures that she forgot to note how rapidly the time was flying on.

Suddenly she heard a whistle, and she knew that she was lingering over-long. Hurriedly concealing her one or two souvenirs, she wrapped herself in her cloak, put on her hat and a very thick veil, descended the stairs, and found the Frenchman, who was waiting impatiently outside the gate. He said nothing—it was no time for talking; but he threw his arms around her and hurried her away.

Whither they went Marjorie scarcely knew, for in the excitement of the scene her senses almost left her. She was conscious only of being hurried along the dark road; then of being seated in a carriage by the Frenchman's side.

CHAPTER XXI.

A REVELATION.

THE carriage drove on, proceeding rapidly in the direction of Dumfries. It had not gone far, however, before Marjorie uttered a wild cry, and sprang trembling towards the door.

'What is it, my love?' cried Caussidière.

'Stop the carriage! I cannot go away with you! Let me go back!'

Swift as thought, Caussidière encircled her waist, drew her down beside him on the seat, and kissed her fondly.

'It is too late, my Marjorie! You have no home now but the home to which I take you. To-morrow you will be my little wife.'

'They will never forgive me!' she pleaded. 'It is so wicked, so unkind, to leave them like this!'

The Frenchman laughed.

'Are you not your own mistress? Have you not a right to choose your own husband? Ah, yes! And after all, who is there *now* who cares for you as I, who love you? No one in the wide world! In a little while, Marjorie, we shall return together, and then, believe me, they will say that you have done well.'

Dazed and stupefied, Marjorie yielded. She knew at last that she had taken the one great step on the path which leads to happi-

ness or misery, and from which there is no retreating. Sadly as her heart misgave her, it was too late for regret. Sobbing passionately, she clung to her lover, and appealed to his good faith and his affection.

He soothed her and reassured her, till she lay weak, helpless, and trusting, with her head upon his shoulder.

Through the darkness of the night they fled onward to Dumfries. As they reached the suburbs of the little town, midnight was sounded from one of the church towers. The carriage left the highway, and rumbled on the causeway of the streets. About a quarter of an hour later it drew up in front of the railway station.

All was very quiet and gloomy. The only human being visible was a solitary railway porter.

Caussidière leapt out.

'At what hour passes the express for the south?' he demanded.

'At half-past twelve, sir. You've ten or twelve minutes.'

Marjorie drew the hood of her cloak closely round her face, and, taking her lover's hands, descended from the carriage, and stood shivering and trembling on the pavement.

Caussidière paid the fly-driver, and, ordering the porter to follow with the luggage, drew Marjorie's hand upon his arm and strolled into the station.

On reaching the platform, Marjorie cast a frightened look around, dreading to behold some familiar face; but, beyond a couple of half-tipsy commercial travellers and a cattle-driver *en route* for the south, no one was visible.

A little later the two were seated alone in a first-class carriage, and rapidly whirling southward.

Caussidière was gay and exultant, and looked at his companion with inexpressible delight. All his plans had succeeded perfectly, and he was complete master of the situation. Thanks to Miss Hethering-ton, also, he could afford to travel *en grand seigneur*. The fly-driver and the railway porter had received proofs of his liberality, and he had 'tipped' the guard.

'Are you happy now, my Marjorie?' he cried, embracing her.

Marjorie smiled faintly, and answered, with an hysterical sob, that she was very happy; but her heart still felt like lead, and she would have given the world to undo what she had done.

The train ran right through to Carlisle, where they alighted. Hailing a fly, they were driven to an inn, already familiar to Caussidière, in an obscure part of the town. They were evidently expected, and the hostess had prepared separate rooms.

After a slight supper, of which Marjorie scarcely partook, but which the Frenchman made festive with a bottle of very bad champagne, they parted for the night.

'Good-night, my darling!' said Caussidière fondly. 'To-morrow, early, I shall be the happiest man in all the world.'

Nothing could be kinder or more respectful than his manner; yet poor Marjorie retired with a heavy heart, and it was not for some hours afterwards that she cried herself to sleep.

* * * * *

The day following Marjorie's departure there was commotion at the manse. At early morning her absence had been discovered, and to make assurance doubly sure, the following note had been found lying open on her dressing-table :

'DEAR MR. MENTEITH,—

'When you receive this, I shall be far away. I have gone with one who loves me very much, and in a few hours we shall be married. Pray, pray do not think me wicked or ungrateful; but I was afraid to tell you how much I loved him, for fear you should be angry at my choice. He has promised to bring me back in a little time to ask forgiveness of all my friends. Tell Solomon, with my fond love, how weary I shall be till I see him again; he was always

so good to me, and I shall never, never forget him. Tell Miss Hetherington, too; I never had a kinder friend; but she must not blame me for following the wish of my heart. God bless you all! Your loving

'MARJORIE ANNAN.'

That was the letter, and Mr. Menteith read it aloud in utter amazement. It would be false to say that he exhibited any more violent emotion, for he had merely a friendly interest in the girl, and felt for her no overmastering affection. But Solomon Mucklebackit, after listening thunderstruck, uttered a wild cry, and struck his forehead with his clenched hand.

'I kenned it, I foresaw it! It's the Frenchman, *dawm* him!'

'Hush,' said the minister. 'No profanity, my man.'

'Dawm him, dawm him!' repeated the sexton, trembling with passion. 'He has stolen oor Marjorie awa'. I saw the deil's mark on his face when he first came creeping ben oor house and fell sleeping in oor kirk. Dawm him, I say—noo and for evermair!'

Then Mr. Menteith remembered the warning he had received from Miss Hetherington. Not without difficulty, he elicited from Solomon, who was almost distraught, the whole story of Caussidière's acquaintance with Marjorie, and subsequent visits to the manse.

'After all,' said Mr. Menteith reflectively, 'he is a gentleman, and as they are going to be married——'

'Married!' ejaculated Solomon. 'Marry an awtheist—marry the deil! But he'll ne'er marry her. He'll betray her and heartbreak her, and cast her awa'.'

In the limits of a small Scotch village news of any kind soon spreads, and before mid-day Marjorie's elopement was being discussed everywhere. Presently John Sutherland appeared at the manse, looking pale as death. On questioning Mr. Menteith, he soon learned the whole state of affairs.

'I understand it all,' he cried. 'Late last night, as I was standing at our door, I saw a carriage go by at full speed, and I caught a glimpse of a man's face looking from the window in the light of the lamp. I thought I recognised him; now I am sure it was the Frenchman.'

'Dawm him for evermair!' repeated Solomon, regardless of Mr. Menteith's rebuke.

'And she has gone—gone of her own free will?'

Mr. Menteith handed him Marjorie's letter. He read it, and his eyes filled with tears.

'May God deal with him as he deals with *her!*' he groaned. 'Does Miss Hethering-ton know what has happened?'

'Not yet,' replied Mr. Menteith.

'I will go to her at once,' cried Suther-land. 'It is right that she should know. Perhaps she can advise us what to do.'

Without further parley he hastened off, running at full speed in the direction of the Castle, and taking a short cut familiar to him across the fields. Only the man who

remembers his first love, and how it ended in despair and sorrow, can guess what Sutherland felt; but despite his hopeless sense of misery, he had a vague, dim idea that some kind of action would have to be taken.

Breathless and wild, he arrived at the Castle door. Directly he had summoned the serving-woman, he discovered that the news had arrived before him.

'She's like a wild creature,' said the servant. 'I'm in dread to face her, and she's ordered oot the carriage, and will drive awa' at once. If ye *must* see her, gang in yersel'; I daurna announce your coming!'

Sutherland stepped into the hall.

'Wheesht!' whispered the woman. 'I hear her coming doon the stair.'

Scarcely had she spoken, when Miss Hetherington, cloaked and bonneted, appeared at the farther end of the hall. She approached feebly, leaning on her staff; and as Sutherland hastened to meet her, he saw that her face was like that of a corpse, her hair dishevelled and wild, her whole frame trembling with unusual excitement.

'Is it true?' she cried, gripping Sutherland's arm.

'Yes, Miss Hetherington.'

'Marjorie Annan has left the manse?'

'Yes, last night.'

'And in that scoundrel's company?'

'I believe so; but in her letter she mentions no name.'

'Her letter? What letter?'

Sutherland thereupon told her of the lines Marjorie had left for Mr. Menteith.

She listened trembling; then, seizing the young man's arm again, she drew him into the drawing-room, and closed the door.

'Let me think, let me think!' she cried, sinking into a chair, and covering her face with her hand.

When she looked up, her eyes were full of tears.

'She's a lost lassie! And I might have saved her had I known! Oh, Marjorie, Marjorie! My brother's curse has come home to us both at last!'

Sutherland looked at her in utter astonishment. He had expected to find her angry and indignant, but her manner as well as her words were beyond measure extraordinary. Before he could speak again, she rose to her feet, and said between her firmly set lips:

'Johnnie Sutherland, listen to me! Have you the heart of a man?'

'What do you mean?'

'While you stand glowering there, she's rushing awa' to her ruin! Will you gang after her, and in that villain's very teeth bring her back?'

'I don't even know where she has gone,' replied Sutherland; 'and besides, she has fled of her own will, and I have no right——'

Miss Hetherington interrupted him impatiently, almost fiercely.

'You have this right, that you loved her yoursel'. Ay, I ken all that! Find her, save her from that man, and I swear before God you shall marry her, Johnnie Sutherland!'

But the young man shook his head, looking the picture of despair.

'It is too late,' he said; 'and, after all, he is her choice!'

'What right has she to choose?' cried Miss Hetherington. 'She cannot, she dare not, against my wish and will. I tell you he has beguiled her, and spirited her awa'. If you were half a man, you'd be after them ere this—you'd hunt them down.'

'But what could I do?' exclaimed Sutherland, in utter consternation.

'Do!' cried the lady of the Castle, almost screaming. '*Kill* the scoundrel —*kill* him! . . . Oh, if I had my fingers at his throat, I'd strangle him, old as I am!'

Overpowered with her emotion, she sank again into a chair. Full of amazement and sympathy, Sutherland bent over and

endeavoured to calm her. As he did so, she began moaning and sobbing as if heart-broken.

Then suddenly, with eyes streaming and lips quivering, she looked pathetically up in his face.

'The blame is all mine!' she sobbed. 'God has punished me, Johnnie Sutherland. I should have defied the scandal o' the world, and taken her to my heart langsyne. . . . I'm a sinful woman, and—Marjorie Annan is my child!'

CHAPTER XXII.

WEDDING BELLS.

When at length Marjorie fell to sleep in the inn at Carlisle, she slept soundly, and was only awakened from troubled dreams by a loud knocking at her bedroom door.

For a moment she thought she was in the manse. She leapt from her bed and opened the door, expecting to admit Mysie, but she was confronted by a smart chambermaid, who brought her hot water

and her boots, and said, with a respectful courtesy:

'The gentleman wishes to know, if you please, miss, what you would like to have for breakfast.'

The first sight of the girl had brought back to Marjorie the memory of all that had passed, and she turned away with a sigh.

'Nothing,' she said; 'that is, anything — whatever he wishes. I'm not caring.'

With another courtesy the girl retired, and Marjorie, having locked the door, threw herself on the bed and cried bitterly. What was she crying for? She hardly knew—she had come there of her own free will; it was too late for repentance; she was as much in the Frenchman's power

as if she had already been made his wife.

She dressed herself quickly; when she was ready she stood before the mirror for a moment, and was shocked at the sight of her face. How pale and sad she looked for an expectant bride! She tried to look brighter, to think of pleasant things; but it was useless: that weary, harassed look would come into her eyes and remain there.

While she was still before the mirror the maid returned, announced that the breakfast was ready, and offered to conduct Marjorie to the gentleman, who was awaiting her below. Trembling very much, Marjorie followed the girl downstairs.

Caussidière had taken a private room. When he saw Marjorie's face he con-

gratulated himself on the foresight; but although he noted her pale cheek and sad eyes, he gave no indication of it in his manner.

He came forward to meet her with both his hands outstretched. He took her in his arms and kissed her, then he sat beside her at the table and tried to make her eat.

'My little wife must not get ill,' he said, 'she must think of her bright future, not of her sad past. A few months, only a very few months, my Marjorie, and you shall come back again. In the meantime you must let me take a pretty and a happy bride to France.'

Under his reassuring influence Marjorie's sadness partly wore away; and a little later, when she found herself walking in the

fields by his side, she almost imagined she was transported to those early days when he first came to Annandale.

It was such a morning as would make anyone feel glad; the whole heavens and earth seemed to be smiling upon her—the sun was shining brightly from above, and birds were singing in the air all round.

'A pleasant omen,' said Caussidière, gazing smilingly about him, and patting Marjorie's hand as it lay upon his arm. 'Marjorie, *ma belle*, if the old superstition comes true yours should be a happy bridal.'

'Ah, but I am not a bride yet,' answered Marjorie quietly.

'Not yet,' answered Caussidière, 'but it's almost the same thing, little one. Nothing could part us now, Marjorie.'

The Frenchman took her in his arms and pressed her almost roughly, and then hurried on as if eager to bring that strange business to an end.

It was certainly a primitive wedding. The two walked together through the fields until they came to a quaint old church standing alone on a lonely suburban road. When they entered it was quite empty, and Caussidière, grown very serious now, looked at his watch and walked restlessly about. Marjorie entered one of the pews, and, falling on her knees, prayed silently.

How long she remained there she did not know; a hand laid gently upon her shoulder recalled her to herself, and looking up, she saw her lover.

'Come, Marjorie,' he said; 'come, my love.'

She rose from her knees; he put his arms about her and led her away.

What followed seemed like a dream. She was only dimly conscious of walking up the broad aisle and taking her place before the altar rails. She saw as in a mist the clergyman in his white robes, and a man and a woman who were complete strangers. She was conscious of the service being read, of giving her responses, of her hands being clasped, and of a ring being put upon her finger. Then she was led away again; she was in a strange room, she signed her name, and as she laid down the pen Caussidière clasped her in his arms and kissed her.

'My wife!' he said.

Yes, it was all over; the past was done with, the future begun. Marjorie

Annan had been by that simple ceremony transformed into 'Marjorie Caussidière.'

The ceremony over, the husband and wife returned to the inn.

Marjorie was astonished to find an elaborate luncheon laid out in their private room. Caussidière, who seemed to have a weight lifted from his heart, made her sip the champagne which he poured for her with his own hand; he saw the roses return to her cheeks, the light of happiness in her eyes; and when a few moments later the landlady came up to drink the health of the strangely wedded pair, Marjorie looked bright and happy as a bride should do.

Shortly after luncheon they again left the inn, Caussidière feeing all the servants

royally, and Marjorie smiling well pleased, as one and all, taken by her gentle manners and pretty face, murmured their congratulations and wished the young bride a long and happy life.

Then she entered the carriage which was awaiting her, and drove away by her husband's side to the railway station.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE PURSUIT.

THE revelation of the true relationship between the minister's ward and the proud lady of the Castle fairly stupefied John Sutherland, it was so utterly overwhelming and unexpected.

Unusually simple-minded, and very ignorant of the world, he had been accustomed to regard Miss Hetherington as a being far removed, both by birth and education, above ordinary weaknesses, pec-

cadilloes, and temptations; a sort of moral granite, with none of the softness and frangibility of commoner materials; a lady, in a word, without spot or flaw, and famous for her severity towards evildoers, especially those of her own sex. Yes, it was indeed a thunderclap! And to hear the confession from her own lips, to see the world-worn face gazing at him in mingled fierceness and humiliation, while the feeble frame shook like a storm-beaten tree, seemed most terrible of all.

No wonder Sutherland went ghastly pale, and could not at first articulate a word.

There was a long pause, filled only with the low monotonous wail of the miserable woman. At last Sutherland found his tongue, though to little purpose.

'Oh, Miss Hetherington, what is this you

are tèlling me? I cannot believe it! Marjorie your daughter! Surely, surely you cannot mean what you say?'

'It is God's truth, Johnnie Sutherland,' replied the lady, gradually recovering her composure. 'I thought to bear the secret with me to my grave, but it's out at last. Grief and despair wrenched it out o' me ere I kenned what I was saying. Gang your ways,' she added bitterly, 'and spread it like the town-crier. Let all the world ken that the line o' the Hetheringtons ends as it began, in a black bar sinister and a nameless shame.'

'Do not say that!' cried Sutherland. 'What you have said is sacred between you and me, I assure you! But Marjorie . . . Did *she* know what you have told to me?'

Miss Hetherington shook her head.

'She had neither knowledge nor suspicion. Even Mr. Lorraine knew nothing, though whiles I fancied that he made a guess. Only one living man besides yoursel' ever found out the truth, and maybe ere this Marjorie has learned it frae *him*. God help me! she'll learn to hate and despise me when he tells her all.'

'You mean the Frenchman?' said Sutherland. 'How is that he——'

'Curse him for a black-hearted devil!' said Miss Hetherington, with an access of her old fury. 'He came here like a spy when I was awa', and he searched amang my papers, and he found in my desk a writing I should have burnt langsyne. Then he threatened, and fool-like I gave him money to quit the place. He *has* quitted it, but with *her* in his company, wae's me!'

And she wrung her hands in despair. Then quick as thought her mood changed, and she rose trembling to her feet.

'But there's no time to be lost. While we stand blethering and glowering, he's bearing her awa'. Johnnie Sutherland, let me look in your face! Once again, have ye the heart of a man?'

Suiting the action to the word, she gazed at him as if to read his very soul.

'Folk think ye o'er gentle,' she continued, 'but I've aye liked you because I was sure ye had a stubborn will when your conscience told you that the right was on your side. If that man has wronged Marjorie Annan, would you be feared to face him and avenge her?'

'If he has played the villain,' answered Sutherland, deathly pale, but determined, 'I

would hunt him down and punish him, though I had to follow him round and round the world.'

As the young man spoke, his face wore an expression which few had ever noticed there before; all the softness and sweetness disappeared, the lines deepened, the eyes hardened, and the entire aspect grew hard as granite and as unrelenting.

'I was right,' cried the old lady, noticing the change. 'Ye have the Hetherington temper, Johnnie Sutherland. Oh that I were a man, to gang in your place! but you shall follow them with the swiftness o' youth and the keenness o' injured love.'

A few minutes later, Sutherland left the Castle, fully authorized to bring Marjorie back if possible, and armed with ample means, in the shape of a large sum of money,

which Miss Hetherington thrust upon him.

Left to herself in the lonely Castle, the lady retired to her private suite of apartments, and there gave way to the wild tempest of her sorrow and despair. Pride and self-reproach contended together for the mastery of her heart; but love was there too—the intense love of maternity, which for nearly eighteen years had been flickering secretly like a feeble fire.

Sitting in her armchair, her head lying back and her eyes fixed wildly on the window's glimmering square and the dreary prospect beyond, she fell into a troubled dream of the past.

Again she was a proud, passionate girl, reckless in her comings and goings, caring for nothing in the world but the smiles of

one man, and fearing nothing but the anger of her savage brother, in whom the tigerish blood of the male Hetheringtons ran twice fiery through lust and wine.

So haughty and unlovable had she seemed, so stubborn and capricious, that only one man had dared to woo her—that man her father's and her brother's enemy, the enemy of all her house. They had met in secret, and she, with characteristic stubbornness, had loved him better for the feud that might have kept them asunder. And at last in a wild moment of impulse she had placed herself at his mercy, and had loved him without God's blessing or the sanction of clergyman or priest.

She remembered it all, the daily sense of danger, the secret meetings, the passionate protestations, all the terrors and ecstasy of

a forbidden love. He had sworn to marry her, to make her the mistress of a house far greater than her own, but had ever delayed, still pleading the ill-blood between the two families. Nor had she dared to press him too eagerly, dreading as she did the wrath of her own people.

Then, to the terror and amaze of both, came the knowledge that she was about to become a mother!

Not till she confessed her situation to him did she discover that the hate of her family was justified, and that she had loved a villain; for almost simultaneously came the news that he was about to marry the daughter of an English Earl. She taxed him with it; he scarcely took the trouble to deny it. He could never, he said, unite himself with one of her house.

How it came about she scarcely knew; but one night, when she met her lover and faced him with wild upbraidings, a hand like iron was laid upon her arm, and turning, she saw her brother Hugh. The two men faced each other; there were a few words, then a blow, and she saw her lover's face livid and bleeding as she swooned away.

Later that night, when Hugh Hethering-ton sought her in that very chamber where she was now sitting, he had wrung the whole truth from her, and, hearing it, had struck *her* too with his clenched fist in the face.

As she thought of that time, she rose feebly and looked into the glass. Yes, the mark was there yet; she would carry it to her grave.

Her worn face went ghastlier yet as she remembered what had followed. How her wild brother left the place and was absent for many days; and how, just after he returned and drove her forth, she read in a newspaper that Lord Lochmaben, of the great Lochmabens of the Border, had just died suddenly in his thirty-fifth year, somewhere abroad. There was no scandal; the world did not even know how Lochmaben perished; but *she* knew that he had fallen by the hand of Hugh Hetherington, in a duel fought with swords on foreign soil.

Ah, the darkness, the horror, the desolation of the next few months! No one but her brother knew her secret, and he kept it well, so that all the world heard was that the brother and sister had quarrelled, and that she had left the Castle to dwell, tem-

porarily at least, apart. No one wondered. The Hetherington temper was well known, a by-word; it was as natural that such a brother and sister should hate each other as that swords should clash or fire and torrent disagree.

Creeping in secret to a town upon the English border, she had hidden her shame among the poorest of the poor. No one knew her; no one suspected but that she was some lowly woman who had gone astray in a manner only too common among her class. Then at last her little one was born.

Sitting and reviewing it all darkly, seeing memory's phantom images flashing and fading before her, like colours ever changing in a kaleidoscope, Miss Hetherington felt again that wild, murderous

thrill which hunted creatures, animal and human, often feel, and which tempts them —despairingly, deliriously—to destroy their young. She shuddered and cowered, remembering her first impulse. But the child had lived; and one night, holding it to her heart, the mother had disappeared from the strange town as mysteriously as she had come, leaving no trace or clue.

Fascinated and afraid, she had returned to Annandale, hiding herself by day, travelling in the darkness only. How dark it had been, how the wind had roared, that night when she flitted like a ghost round the manse, and saw the gentle old pastor counting his souvenirs within! Her intention had been to go right on to the Castle with her burthen; but the sight of the good man decided her, and she acted as

the reader knows—leaving the infant on the doorstep, and flitting silently away.

That night the brother and sister stood face to face. What was said and done no one knew; but after a stormy scene the lady remained at the Castle. No one dreamed of connecting her with the waif just discovered at the manse door, for no one but her brother knew the secret of her fall; and as if by a special Providence, the corpse of a woman was washed up some days later on the Solway sands, and suspicion pointed to this woman as the mother of the little castaway.

From that time forth, till the day (which came soon) when her brother died, Miss Hetherington had little or no communion with him; and when he passed away, as wildly and darkly as he had lived, she shed

no tears. She had never forgiven him, would never forgive him this side the grave, for slaying the only man she had ever loved, and who might perhaps have made amends. She brooded over her wrongs till she grew prematurely old, and dwelt in the lonely house, of which she was now sole mistress, like a ghost in a sepulchre, from dismal day to day.

One comfort remained to her—one great comfort and mysterious joy. With no stain on her proud name, with no scandalous mouth to breathe her secret, she still preserved her child—so near to her that she could watch over her from year to year with gloomy yet tender love. Again and again she yearned to take the little girl to her arms and avow her motherhood; but she shrank from the shame, and perhaps, if

no fatality had prevented her, she might have carried the secret to her grave.

And now, when her child seemed lost to her, she wildly reproached herself for not having told her the sad truth long ago. Marjorie would have kept her secret; of that she was sure; and doubtless, being of loving disposition, would have rewarded her confidence with tender love, shrinking from her no longer, comforting and pitying her as a gentle daughter should. Ah, yes! her curse had come home, as she had said.

Her dislike to Caussidière had dated almost from their first meeting. It was an instinct, a prepossession, for which she could hardly account; and like all her feelings, it was resolute and unchangeable. But when the man, with what seemed

diabolic ingenuity, fathomed her long-buried secret, and confronted her with the discovery of her shame, the first dislike deepened into over-mastering hate and fear. And now, by a flank movement, he had utterly defeated and cheated her. Well it was for Caussidière that she was not a man, but a feeble, helpless woman. Even in the feebleness and helplessness of her womanhood she might get her fingers around his throat yet, and then—woe to him!

* * * * *

John Sutherland lost no time in the pursuit.

He hastened to Dumfries at once, and, by questioning the railway officials, soon discovered that the fugitives had gone southward by the mail the previous night.

Further inquiry showed that only two first-class passengers had been booked by that train, taking their tickets at Carlisle, and that the person who took the tickets was a gentleman speaking with a strong foreign accent.

At five o'clock he left Dumfries, and before nightfall he was standing on the platform at Carlisle.

Here he was at fault, for Carlisle is a busy central station, where many passengers come and go nightly. He discovered at last, however, from one of the porters, that two persons answering to his description had arrived the previous night and driven away in a hired fly. His next task was to cross-examine all the fly-drivers who had been on duty the previous night; and at last, to his delight, he discovered the

one in whose vehicle the fugitives had been driven away.

Leaping into the fly, he ordered the man to drive him to the hotel where Caussidière and Marjorie had slept—an obscure inn, as has been explained, in a quiet part of the town.

Dismissing the fly, he surveyed the place. It was an old-fashioned inn, with a sign swinging before the door. With anxious heart he entered and turned aside into the bar-parlour, where he sat down and ordered something to drink. He was waited on by the landlady herself, a buxom, middle-aged woman, not disinclined to conversation.

'Can I have a bed here to-night?' he asked.

'And welcome,' replied the woman. 'From the north by your tongue?'

Sutherland nodded.

'You are very quiet, I suppose, at this time of year? Not many guests, I mean?'

'Nay, indeed; but we don't lay ourselves out for fine company. Ours is a quiet house, d'ye see?'

'I think some friends of mine stayed here last night?' proceeded Sutherland, with beating heart. 'I was going to ask you if they are here still?'

'Friends o' yours. Not the French gentleman and the young lady?'

'Yes,' answered Sutherland, trembling violently.

'A fine gentleman, and liberal-handed. 'Tis not the first time he has honoured this house, and had the best rooms. Did you want to see him?'

'Yes. I have come for that purpose.'

'Then you're too late, master. They went away by the one o'clock train, directly the wedding was over.'

The wedding! Sutherland started as if shot through the heart.

The woman saw him change colour, and began with feminine shrewdness to guess the cause.

'Maybe you're a friend of the young lady? Pretty dear, she seemed to be in trouble. It was a runaway match, no doubt!'

Sutherland rose to his feet, trembling like a leaf.

'By the one o'clock train, did you say?' he murmured. 'The train to the south?'

'Yes, to London. Oh, master, is there anything wrong?'

'Yes!—no!—I came too late, that is all. Good-night!'

And he staggered, rather than walked, to the door.

'Then you don't want a bed?' asked the woman, following him.

Without answering her, he passed out into the street, and walked away, he scarcely knew whither.

It was all over, then; he had lost Marjorie for ever. Of what avail was it now to follow and attempt to save her? She had made her choice, and the result was no business of his. In the dark rush of his disappointment, he almost regretted that Caussidière had, so far, behaved like a man of honour. How could he interfere now? Where was his right of action? The man was her husband, and, though

he had behaved in other respects like a scoundrel, he had placed himself beyond the reach of wrath or the necessity of explanation.

Dazed and despairing, he found his way back to the railway station. He found the telegraph office still open, and at once despatched a telegram to Dumfries, paying for a special messenger to take it on to Annandale Castle.

The message was as follows :

'*They were married here this morning, and are gone south together. What am I to do?*'

Knowing that it was impossible to receive a reply before morning, he entered the railway hotel and engaged a bedroom there. He neither undressed nor slept that

night, but paced up and down the chamber, only now and then flinging himself on the bed and giving way to tears of despair.

It was a night of utter misery. The light and joy of the man's young life seemed extinguished for ever, for he had loved Marjorie with all the quiet passion of his soul.

Early the next morning he stood at the telegraph office, looking haggard and ghastly beyond measure, and asked for the answer to his message. It was handed to him, and he read these words:

'*Do not come back. Follow her; hear the truth from her own lips. Spare no expense, but find her. I leave it all to you.*'

It seemed a useless errand, but he was

in no mood to argue or disobey. So he took the first train that was going southward, and before midday was far on his way to London.

CHAPTER XXIV

FACE TO FACE.

It was not until the train reached London and Sutherland stood upon the platform at Euston Square that he felt the utter helplessness of his position.

When he had entered the train at Carlisle he had simply been actuated with a wild wish to carry out Miss Hetherington's commands—to find Marjorie, and whether she were maid, wife, or widow, to bring her again to her home. The eager desire still inspired him, but common-sense now

stepped in, and he asked himself, as he stood on the platform in the waning light of day, whether it would not be better for him to return to Annandale and remind the broken-hearted old lady that her daughter was now legally bound to remain with the man who had stolen her from her home.

Decidedly it would have been the best plan, but Sutherland could not adopt it. Added to his desire to please Miss Hetherington was an eager impulse of his own to see once again the girl whom he had loved 'not wisely, but too well;' to tell her of the revelation which had been made to him; to beg of her, wife or no wife, to return with him to Annandale; and to receive for the first, perhaps for the last, time in her life, a mother's kiss and blessing.

He hailed a hansom, drove off to an hotel, and during the evening set himself to review his position very carefully, and to map out the best course for him to pursue. It was not an easy matter to decide, for it seemed to him he could do absolutely nothing.

Without a single clue as to her whereabouts, he was to look for Marjorie in London—as well look for her in Europe, he thought; still, after all, he argued, greater difficulties than that had often been surmounted, and he had plenty of courage to go on.

He sat down and wrote a little note to Miss Hetherington. He told her in detail of his discovery of Marjorie's marriage, of his journey to London, and of his hopes of finding her, and of inducing her to

return to Annandale, if only for a little while.

As he could do literally nothing that night, except ascertain that Marjorie was not indeed under the same roof with him, he retired early. The next morning, according to his country custom, he rose betimes and was out in the street before the city had shaken off its last trace of repose.

He had laid his plans the night before, and he followed them religiously. He had got in his pocket a long list of all the hotels, and following it *seriatim*, he called at each hotel, made minute inquiries as to the inhabitants, and examined the visitors' book.

When the day was done he had learned nothing, and he was a little out of heart.

The next morning, however, he felt more

hopeful again ; a good night's rest had refreshed his body, and consequently his mind was less morbid. He started off with his list in his pocket, but he determined to pursue his inquiries single-handed no longer. Before going to the hotels he proceeded to Scotland Yard, and enlisted the services of two detectives. These gentlemen spoke so hopefully of the case, and promised so faithfully to find the fugitives, that Sutherland, whose experience of private detectives was very limited indeed, felt that the thing was as good as done.

Although that day his inquiries met with no better success than they had done on the day before, he felt considerably more hopeful at night. He wrote quite cheerfully to Miss Hetherington, said that all

was going well, and that in a very few days he hoped to return to Annandale, bringing her daughter with him.

But alas! days passed, and as each one came on, it found Sutherland more and more disconsolate, more and more despairing as to his chance of ultimate success. The detectives came to him every day and brought their reports, which were not worth the paper they were written upon; they took his money, however, and what with this demand and his own expenses, he found the fund supplied to him by Miss Hetherington grew wofully less. Yet he had done absolutely nothing.

At length, though very reluctantly, Sutherland owned that fate in this particular matter had over-mastered him; probably Marjorie had left London for

France ; at any rate, he decided that further search would be useless ; so he paid off his detectives and made up his mind to return to Annandale.

He had made his last visit to Scotland Yard, and was returning to his hotel to pack up his things for the night train to Scotland, when a curious circumstance happened. Accident revealed to him what a search of months might never have done.

He was walking along moodily with his eyes on the ground ; he had passed into the neighbourhood of Leicester Square, when suddenly he started and trembled from head to foot. A voice, it seemed to him a familiar voice, struck upon his ear ; it was speaking volubly in the French tongue.

Hurriedly he drew aside to allow the person to pass him by; then looking up, he recognised the French teacher—Caussidière.

Yes, it certainly was he, beyond all manner of doubt! He was carrying on such an excited conversation with his companion that he had not even noticed Sutherland, whose sleeve he had almost brushed.

Sutherland's first impulse was to rush forward and confront the Frenchman; his next to drop back, to remain unobserved behind and to follow him.

The latter course he followed.

Where he went he could not tell, being unversed in the ways and the by-ways of the great city, but he was taken in and out of by-streets and slums—mostly inhabited by

French refugees; presently the two men entered a house, from which, after a lapse of half-an-hour, which to Sutherland seemed an eternity, the Frenchman emerged alone. He called up a hansom; Sutherland called up one also, and they rattled away after each other.

The Frenchman's hansom stopped presently at a house in Gower Street. Sutherland, after noting the number of the house in passing, pulled up his hansom at the corner of the next street and walked quietly back again.

By this time both Caussidière and his hansom had disappeared, but Sutherland recognised the place. He walked up and down on the opposite side of the way, examining the house, staring at it as if he would fain penetrate those dark walls and

see the fair face which he suspected to be within.

Then he calmly walked over, knocked at the door, and inquired for 'Madame Caussidière.'

The servant admitted him, and he was at once shown upstairs. In one thing Sutherland was fortunate—Caussidière was not at home.

He had entered the house only for a moment to give his hurried instructions to Marjorie.

'Pack up your things at once,' he had said; 'prepare yourself by the hour of my return. We leave for Paris to-night.'

Then he had hastened down again, entered his hansom, and driven away.

* * * * *

Just an hour later the hansom con-

taining Caussidière stopped again before the house. This time the man received his fare, and the cab drove away empty, while Caussidière entered the house and went up to his rooms.

He found Marjorie in tears, and John Sutherland by her side.

At sight of the latter he started, looking the reverse of pleased; the presence of the young painter, by no means desirable at any time, was at that moment particularly embarrassing. But Caussidière was not easily abashed; his presence of mind only deserted him for a moment: then he came forward with a sinister smile.

'So it is *you*, monsieur,' he said. 'I am amazed, but I cannot say that I am altogether pleased, since through finding Marjorie in your presence, I see her with a

sorrowful face, and with tears in her eyes.'

He came forward as he spoke, and held forth his hand, but Sutherland did not take it. He rose from his seat, and stood awkwardly looking at the two.

Marjorie rushed forward and took her husband's arm.

'Ah, Léon,' she said, 'do not be angry because I cried a little at seeing an old friend. Though I love the past, my love for you is not less; and he has told me such strange news.'

Caussidière smiled down upon her and patted her cheek. It was wonderful how self-possessed he felt now he knew that no one could step between him and his prize.

'Well, my child,' he said, 'and what

is this great news which he has told you ?'

'He has told me of my mother, Léon—of my dear mother !'

'Positively !'

'Do you understand, Léon, that Miss Hetherington is my——'

'Assuredly I understand, little one. If I remember rightly, it fell to my share to tax the lady with the fact some time ago, and she could not deny it.'

'Then you *did* know of it, and you never uttered a word; you never told me, Léon !'

'Told you ? certainly not, *mon amie !* It was not my province to reveal the dark spots on the fame of the proud old lady of the Castle.'

'It was not your province to tempt an

innocent girl away from her home and her friends,' cried Sutherland hotly; 'yet you have done it.'

The Frenchman flushed angrily.

'You will oblige me by leaving the house,' he said, 'if you cannot speak civilly. I have made this lady my wife. She belongs now to me and my country, and she accompanies me to Paris to-night.'

'No, not to-night,' said Marjorie quickly. 'You will not take me away to-night, Léon!'

'And why not to-night, Marjorie?'

'Because I have promised Mr. Sutherland to go back with him to Annandale to see my—to see dear Miss Hetherington. She is ill, and she wants me, monsieur.'

'I regret it, but we do not get everything

we wish in this world. I must leave for Paris without delay !'

Marjorie hesitated and looked confused. Then Sutherland spoke, unconsciously uttering the thoughts which had been in the girl's mind.

'You can go on to Paris,' he said, 'if you allow Marjorie to return with me.'

The Frenchman gave a smile which was half a sneer.

'You are consideration itself, monsieur,' he said. Then, turning to Marjorie, he added: 'What does my wife say to that ?'

'I—I don't know,' she stammered. 'I am so sorry for Miss Hetherington. It would be only for a few days perhaps, and —I could follow you.'

Caussidière smiled again, this time less agreeably.

'You seem to be tender-hearted, Marjorie,' he said, 'to everyone but myself. Truly, an admirable speech to make to your husband in the first flush of the honeymoon. I am too fond of you, however, to lose you quite so soon.'

'Then you will not let me return?'

'Most assuredly I shall not let you go; what is Miss Hetherington to you or to me? She is your mother, perhaps, as you say; but in her case, what does that sacred word "mother" mean? Merely this: a woman so hardened that she could abandon her helpless offspring to the mercy of strangers; and afterwards, when she saw her alone and utterly friendless, had not tenderness enough to come forward and say:

"Marjorie, you are not alone in the world; come to me—your mother!"'

'Ah, Léon, do not talk so!' exclaimed Marjorie; then, seeing Sutherland about to speak, she went towards him with outstretched hands.

'Do not speak,' she whispered, 'for my sake. Since my husband wishes it, I must remain. Good-bye.'

She held forth her hand, and he took it in both of his, and answering her prayer, he remained silent. He had sense enough to see that in the present instance the Frenchman had the power entirely in his own hands, and that he intended to use it. He had noted the sneers and cruel smiles which had flitted over Caussidière's face, and he saw that further interference of his might result in evil for the future of her he loved.

So, instead of turning to the Frenchman, he kept Marjorie's hand and said:

'You are sure, Marjorie, that you wish to remain?'

'Yes,' sobbed Marjorie, 'quite sure. Give my love to my dear mother, and say that very soon my husband will bring me home again.'

He lifted her hand to his lips and kissed it again and again; then without another word, he was about to leave the room, when Caussidière stopped him.

'Monsieur,' he said, 'you will also, if you please, bear a leetle message to our much esteemed Miss Hetherington from *me*. Tell her that, though in the first days of our married life she has tried to separate my wife from me, I bear her no ill-will; on the contrary, I shall be

glad to hear of her prosperity. Tell her also, monsieur,' added the Frenchman blandly, 'that since Marjorie Annan and I are one, we share the same good or evil fortune; that she cannot now gratify her malignity by persecuting Léon Caussidière without persecuting also her *own child!*'

CHAPTER XXV.

ON THE BANKS OF THE SEINE.

In one of the narrow Parisian streets in the near neighbourhood of the Seine, close to quays and old bookstalls, frequented by the *littérateur* out at elbows and the bibliomaniac, there is an obscure cabaret or house of entertainment, bearing the name of *Mouche d'Or*. Besides the sanded salon, with its marble tables and its buffet, presided over by a giddy damsel of forty, there is a dining-chamber upstairs, so low that a tall

man standing upright can almost touch the ceiling with his head, and so badly lit by a narrow window, that a light of some sort is necessary even by broad day.

In this upper chamber, one foggy afternoon in autumn, three years after the occurrence of the events described in the last chapter, a man was seated alone and busily writing at one of the wooden tables. His papers were scattered carelessly on the not too clean tablecloth, on which were spread, besides the said papers and a ten centimes bottle of ink, a knife and fork, a pepper-box, a salt-seller, and a stone bottle of French mustard.

The man was about forty years of age, corpulent, with jet-black hair and moustache, but otherwise clean shaven. The expression of his face was one of brutal and

sensual good humour; his dress that of a workman, blue blouse, with white shirt very open at the throat; but across his breast he wore a massive chain of gold or pinchbeck, and his whole manner had a jaunty impudence and self-assurance not at all characteristic of the true *ouvrier*.

He wrote rapidly, almost furiously, now and then pausing to read, half aloud, the matter on the paper, obviously his own composition. As he did so he smiled well pleased, or frowned savagely. Presently he paused, and stamped with his foot the floor.

In answer to his summons, a young woman of about twenty, gaudily attired, with a liberal display of cheap jewellery, came up the narrow stairs.

'Ah, Adèle!' cried the man, 'is the boy below?'

The woman answered with a careless nod.

'Give him these papers—let him fly with them to the printer. Stay! Is anyone below?'

'No one, Monsieur Fernand.'

'Death of my life, Caussidière is late,' muttered the man. 'Bring me some absinthe and a packet of cigarettes.'

The woman disappeared with the parcel of manuscript, and returned almost immediately, bearing the things ordered. She had scarcely set them down, when a foot was heard upon the stairs, and our old acquaintance, Caussidière, elegantly attired, with faultless gloves and boots, entered the room.

'Here you are!' cried the man. 'You come a little late, *mon camarade.* I should

have liked you to hear the article I have just despatched to the *Bon Citoyen.*'

'It will keep till to-morrow, Huet,' returned the other drily, 'when I shall behold it in all the glory of large type.'

Huet, as the man was named, rapped out a round oath.

'It is a firebrand, a bombshell, by ——!' he cried. 'The dagger-thrust of Marat, with the epigram of Victor Hugo. I have signed it at full length, *mon camarade*—"Fernand Huet, Workman, Friend of the People."'

Caussidière laughed and sat down.

'No man can match you, my good Huet, in the great war of—words.'

'Just so, and in the war of swords, too, when the time comes. Nature has given me the soul of a poet, the heart of a lion, the

strength of Hercules, the tongue of Apollo. Behold me! When heroes are wanted, I shall be there.'

Caussidière smiled and shrugged his shoulders.

'Well, is there any news?' he asked.

'There is, by heaven! Charles Norr is with us, and Deloraine. Ten new comrades signed and took the oath last night, and, in addition, a woman, worth all the ten, Louise Capel, in whose veins the divine blood of the Muses runs as in my own. Ha, ha! you should have seen her as she heard the programme of the patriots. A pythoness, by ——!'

'I know her well,' answered Caussidière contemptuously. 'She comes to us fresh from the Salpetrière.'

'And what then?' demanded Huet,

striking his fist upon the table. 'She brings the nymphs of the boulevards with her, and the corybantes of the cabarets; and these, if the word were given to-night, could have Paris in ashes before dawn. Bah! If you were a poet or a philosopher like myself, who am both, you would know what it is to have the women with us; you would perceive how little chance for escape will be left for yonder little Orpheus of the Tuileries when the Furies are let loose and the Bacchantes begin to shake their gory hair.'

'Well, we shall see,' said Caussidière. 'In the meantime, the German line is advancing, as you are aware.'

'Let them advance, *mon camarade.* There are pitfalls before them, and worse pitfalls for our worse enemies at home.

After all, look you, the Germans are our best friends, rather than our foes. Save for them, the man of December, the Assassin, the Sullen Talent, would still be on the imperial throne. *Ah diable!* he has fallen —all the rest will fall.'

Despite his flowery periods and general air of rhodomontade, Huet had not the air of a man who took his own opinions too seriously. His manner was hectoring and grimly humorous, rather than in any sense of the word earnest and convincing. While on this subject, I may explain to the reader that the patriot in question, Fernand Huet, was a journalist, not a workman. Though he affected the dress and frequently used the *argot* of the working-classes, and, when particularly facetious, called himself a 'tinsmith,' he was never known to labour with

his hands. But he was a familiar figure wherever working men of a political turn congregated; he spoke and wrote as one of them, contributing inflammatory articles to the *Bon Citoyen* and other Radical publications, and writing a great deal of patriotic verse, much of which, though never published, was industriously circulated from mouth to mouth.

He had come many years past from Normandy, where his parents were well-to-do peasants, and he had spent the interval, which embraced the whole period of the Empire, in scribbling, scheming, vagabondizing, and generally loafing. Tolerably well educated, he had put his knowledge to most ignoble uses. He drank a great deal, and was a great admirer of the looser portion of the fair sex.

In fact, he had every vice of the honest Parisian 'patriot,' with scarcely one redeeming virtue.

The two men talked for some time on general subjects; then Huet, after regarding his companion with a prolonged stare, observed with a coarse laugh:

'You are a swell as usual, my Caussidière. *Parbleu*, it is easily seen that you earn not your living, like a good patriot, by the sweat of your brow! Who is the victim, *mon camarade?* Who *bleeds?*'

'I do not waste what I have,' returned Caussidière, 'and I love clean linen, that is all.'

Huet snapped his fingers, and laughed.

'Do you think I am a fool to swallow that *canard?* No, my Caussidière. You

have money, you have a little nest-egg at home. You have a wife, brave boy; she is English, and she is rich.'

'On the contrary, she is very poor,' answered Caussidière. 'She has not a *sous*.'

'*Diable!*'

'Nevertheless, I will not disguise from you that she has wealthy connections, who sometimes assist us in our struggle for subsistence. But it is not much that comes to me from that quarter, I assure you. My correspondence and my translations are our chief reliance.'

'Then they pay you like a prince, *mon camarade!*' cried Huet. 'But there, that is your affair, not mine. You are with us, at any rate, heart and soul?'

'Assuredly.'

Sinking their voices, they continued to converse for some time. At last Caussidière rose to go. After a rough handshake from Huet, and a gruffly murmured '*A bientot*,' he made his way down the narrow stairs, and found himself in the sanded entresol of the cabaret.

Several men in blouses sat at the tables drinking, waited upon by Adèle.

As Caussidière crossed the room the girl followed him to the door and touched him on the shoulder.

'How is madame?' she asked in a low voice. 'I trust much better.'

Caussidière gazed at the questioner with no very amiable expression.

'Do you say Madame Caussidière? How do you know that there is such a person?'

The girl shrugged her shoulders.

'Your wife or your mistress, it is all the same! You know whom I mean, monsieur.'

'She is better, then.'

'And the little *garçon?*'

'Quite well,' answered Caussidière, passing out into the street.

Adèle stood looking at him as he sauntered away; then, with a gesture of supreme dislike, she turned back into the cabaret. A little later in the evening she was entertaining a select gathering of working-men and loafers with popular songs—some patriotic, others of very doubtful morality. She sang in a shrill, high voice to the accompaniment of a piano played on by an old man; and from time to time, retiring into an inner room, changed her ordinary dress for a

'character' one, not always of the most modest kind. After each ditty, she went round with a plate collecting coppers; and the money she took, depending upon the general enthusiasm, was generally in exact proportion to the broadness of the allusions made in her last performance.

Leaving the *Mouche d'Or* behind him, and passing along the banks of the Seine, Caussidière crossed the river and reached the neighbourhood of the Palais Royal. From time to time he exchanged a nod or a greeting with some passer-by, generally a person much more shabbily attired than himself. Lingering among the arches, he purchased one or two journals from the itinerant vendors, and then passed slowly on till he reached a narrow back street, before one of the doors of which he paused

and rang a bell. The door being opened by a man in his shirt-sleeves, who greeted him with a 'bon soir,' he passed up a dingy flight of wooden stairs till he gained the second floor, which consisted of three rooms *en suite*, a small salon, a bedchamber, and a smaller bedchamber adjoining.

In the salon, which was gaudily but shabbily furnished in red velvet, with mirrors on the walls, a young woman was seated sewing, and playing near to her was a child about a year and a half old. Both mother and child were very pale and delicate, but both had the same soft features, gentle blue eyes, and golden hair.

The woman was Marjorie Annan—Marjorie with all the lightness and happiness gone out of her face, which had grown sad and very pale. As Caussidière entered,

she looked up eagerly, and greeted him by his Christian name. The child paused timidly in his play.

'You are late, Léon,' said Marjorie, in French. 'I have waited in all day, expecting you to return.'

'I was busy, and couldn't come,' was the reply. 'Any letters?'

'No, Léon.'

Caussidière uttered an angry exclamation, and threw himself into an armchair.

'The old woman had better take care,' he cried. 'Nearly a week has now passed, and she has not replied to my note—that is, to yours. And we want money infernally, as you know.'

Marjorie sighed, and her eyes filled with tears.

'Why are you crying?' demanded her

husband sharply. 'Because you have an unnatural mother, who would rather see you starve than share her wealth with you, or with the child ?'

'No, no, it is not that,' answered Marjorie. 'Miss Hetherington has been very good. She has given us a great deal already ; but we require so much, and I am sure she is not so rich as you suppose.'

'She is a miser, I tell you,' returned Caussidière. 'What she has sent you is not sufficient for an ordinary sempstress's wage. She had better take care ! If she offends me, look you, I could bring her to shame before all the world.'

'You would never do that !'

'But yes! Why should I spare her? She hates me, and I hate her. If it is war *à outrance*——'

'Oh, Léon, do not talk so!' cried Marjorie, weeping now in good earnest. 'I am sure you do not mean what you say, but it sounds so cruel. She is my dear mother, after all.'

'A pretty mother! No better than a common woman of the town.'

'Ah, do not say that! She is so good, and she has had so much sorrow. And think of me, of little Léon! Whatever shame and sorrow you brought upon Miss Hetherington *we* should have to share.'

'And what of *me!*' exclaimed Caussidière passionately. 'What of *me*, who married you, who lifted you from the mud, where she left you, and made you my wife? I, too, must share the humiliation, I suppose. I, who could have married a lady of my own country, a lady without a stain, rich too!

It is a pretty thing to live on like this, a beggar on your mother's bounty ; but I tell you I am sick of it all.'

At this moment there was a knock at the room door, and the man who had admitted Caussidière entered with a letter.

'A letter for madame,' he said.

Marjorie took the letter, and, while the man retired, opened it with trembling hands. Her husband watched her gloomily, but his eye glistened as he saw her draw forth a bank order.

'Well ?' he said.

'It is from Miss Hetherington—from my —my mother ! Oh, is she not good ! Look, Léon ! An order upon the bank for thirty pounds.'

'Let me look at it !' said Caussidière, rising and taking it from his wife's hand.

'Thirty pounds! It is not much. Well, what does the old woman say?'

'I—I have not read the letter.'

'Let *me* read it!' he said, taking it from her and suiting the action to the words.

It was a longish communication. Caussidière read it slowly, and his face darkened, especially when he came to the following words:

'If you are unhappy, come back to me. Remember your home is always here. Oh, Marjorie! my bairn! never forget that! It is a mother's heart that yearns and waits for you! Come back, Marjorie, before it is broken altogether.'

Caussidière tossed the letter on the table.

'So you have been telling her that you are unhappy,' he said with a sneer. 'In

the future I must see all your letters, even to the postscripts. And she begs you to go back to Scotland ! Well, who knows?—it may come to that yet!'

CHAPTER XXVI.

MOTHER AND CHILD.

During the first few months of her married life, poor Marjorie had worn as hopeful a look as any bride could wish to wear. For she was happy in a sense. Caussidière was kind, and the complete novelty in her new surroundings interested and amused her, and prevented her from thinking too much of those whom she had left. Not that she ever forgot them; on the contrary, the one great secret of her enjoyment of Paris was

the thought of the wondrous accounts, almost like fairy tales, which she would carry to her old friends in Annandale.

She was like a child left alone on an enchanted island; or like one who, after having spent all its life in darkness, is suddenly brought forth to gaze upon the glory of a midsummer sun. The splendour of the city filled her simple eyes with a wondering kind of delight. She was never tired of walking in the Champs Elysées or the Bois de Boulogne, and gazing with simple admiration upon the trim beauty of her surroundings. Their very artificiality pleased her, accustomed as she had always been to crag and moor.

During this time she saw very little of Caussidière—but at this she was not surprised. He had of course many pursuits

which she could not understand, many interests which she could not share. It was inevitable, and Marjorie did not complain. If he was absent a good deal from her side, he had important duties, she said to herself, which called him away. For the rest, he was not of a jealous turn. He allowed her to seek amusements out of doors, and enjoy them as well as she could alone; and when he was with her he was ever ready to listen pleasantly to the account of the wonders which she had seen.

But novelties of this kind soon exhaust themselves, except to childish minds, and Marjorie was now no child. There came a time when the artificial and toy-like beauty of 'Lutetia of the Parisians' palled upon her; her soul cried out for sympathy; she looked around her and found that no

sympathetic communion was at hand. She began to realize, for the first time, how very far removed spiritually she was from the man whose life she had agreed to share.

Gradually they had drifted further and further apart; and now Marjorie asked herself where did the fault lie? Perhaps with herself; she had taken for granted from the first that she could not share his interests, and perhaps she had done wrong. Well, she would try to repair the wrong, and perhaps in the future all would be well.

With a new hope in her heart she waited and waited for her husband to come to her. Caussidière was late that night, and he looked worried. Marjorie saw this with pain, and asked tenderly what was the matter.

'Nothing,' returned Caussidière petulantly; 'nothing, that is, which you could understand. If you have not supped, Marjorie, I'll sup with you.'

Marjorie had supped, but she would not say so. She ordered up the meal, and they sat down to it together, Caussidière meanwhile thinking of anything but the woman who sat beside him. When the repast was over he rose.

'Now, Marjorie,' he said, 'you must go to bed. I expect some people here to-night, and must be alone with them.'

On another occasion Marjorie without a word of protest would have gone obediently to her couch to think over Miss Hetherington's letters and her old home; now she paused, and went timidly to her husband.

'Léon,' she said, 'I am sure there is something troubling you. Will you not tell me what it is ?'

Caussidière turned impatiently from her.

'Where is the use?' he returned; 'you would not understand.'

'But I will try,' returned Marjorie. 'I should wish to share your troubles with you, Léon, for I am your wife.'

Caussidière started and looked at her with a new light in his eyes. What did it mean?—was she going to be troublesome, this stupid little wife of his ? Was she going to become something more than a lay figure through which his pockets could be filled ? Any such signs should be crushed out with a merciless hand.

'Certainly, Marjorie, you are my wife,'

he said, 'consequently you must do as I tell you.'

'Of course I will do so, but——'

'Very good,' returned Caussidière quietly. 'I am glad you have learned a lesson which most women find difficult. It saves much trouble. It is much better to do things willingly than unwillingly, since they have to be done.'

He turned away as if the subject were ended, but Marjorie was not satisfied; timidly she approached him again.

'Léon,' she said, 'I will obey you as I have said, but I wish to do more. I wish to share your troubles, to bring to you comfort, and to be to you all that a good wife should be.'

Caussidière gave a smile which was half a sneer.

'Suppose all this were impossible—what then?' he said. 'I tell you, Marjorie, the only thing you can give me is what you seem disinclined to give me—obedience. There, there, hurry away. I have more important things to fill my head than home worries. Good-night.'

She went to bed to spend half the night in tears.

From that time forth the idea of any spiritual communion existing between herself and her husband vanished for ever from Marjorie's mind, and she began to fear the man whom she had hoped to love and honour.

If she was tempted now and again to broach the subject which he pronounced a forbidden one between them, she was quickly deterred by the look which crossed her hus-

band's face. It was that look which had made Marjorie begin to fear him.

Still, she had one hope which kept her from despairing utterly—it was the hope of returning once more to her old home. During those weary days when she sat at home alone she recalled the promise which Caussidière had made to take her back and show her once more the faces and the home which she had loved. In every letter which she wrote to Miss Hetherington she spoke so eagerly of their meeting, and of the happy time which would come to her when she got back to Annandale, that she unconsciously gave the old lady a glimpse of the hopelessness of her domestic life.

Thus time rolled on. Days passed into weeks, weeks into months. The first year

of their married life had almost expired, and no mention was made of the promise which Caussidière had given. At length Marjorie, timidly enough, mentioned the matter to him. To her amazement, he received the proposal that he should take her back with an amused smile.

'And so you really think, little one,' said he, 'that I could bury myself again in that outlandish place, and subject myself again to the tragical airs of Madame Mère!'

'But, Léon, you promised.'

'Did I? Well, perhaps I did; but if so, that was before marriage. This is twelve months after. *Voilà la difference.*'

'Do you say, then,' said Marjorie, in a voice almost broken by tears, 'that I am *never* to go back home?'

'Not at all. Probably you will go, but not yet. Why should you wish to go? Are you not contented here with me?'

'Yes, I am quite contented, only——'

'Well?'

'Ah, do not be angry with me. Perhaps you would not comprehend, but it is so lonely for me. You have all your friends about you, and I have no one. They are all strange to me, and I long so much to see a face that I have known. Léon, dear, do you understand?'

It did not seem that he did understand, for he put her from him coldly.

'You talk like a child,' he said. 'Lonely? Why should you feel lonely? Are not my friends your friends? What more do you wish?'

His friends! Marjorie shuddered as she

recalled them—the boisterous men and coarse loud women who came to the house, and whom she shrank from and feared almost as much as she now feared her husband. At first her unfamiliarity with the language had alienated her from these beings, who revolved like satellities around Caussidière; and afterwards, when she grew more familiar with the tongue, she voluntarily kept herself apart. What they were, who they were, she did not know; she only felt that their lives could never be brought into close communion with her own.

Of all this she said nothing to Caussidière. They were his friends, and she knew that any comment upon them would be sharply resented.

So time passed on, and every day matters

grew worse between husband and wife. The veil was falling from Marjorie's eyes indeed.

Often as she sat alone, with the troubled city all round her, she pictured to herself how different had been her lot when she lived a simple country girl by the side of Annan Water. Better for her, perhaps, if she had married John Sutherland and dwelt beside her own kith and kin.

How happy and peaceful all that life seemed to her now—now that she had no one with whom to share a thought!

Thus Marjorie came to that time in her life when the craving for sympathy is strongest. In the midst of the roar of Paris her child was born—a little boy, who grew into a bright-eyed little fellow, and became the idol of poor Marjorie's heart.

She had hoped at first that the birth of the child might knit more closely together the love of the father and mother; but so far from looking upon the event as a pleasant one, Caussidière seemed irritated at the affair, and took no pains to conceal his anger. It simply meant a drag upon him, and as such he resented it.

So the boy, who used to cling affectionately about his mother's neck, learned to look with dread upon this tall, dark, gloomy man, whom he was taught to call 'father.' Seeing this, the mother loved him with all the strength of her young heart; indeed, it was his presence alone which kept her spirit from sinking utterly.

* * * * *

The receipt of Miss Hetherington's cheque

seemed to come like oil upon the troubled waters of the little household. Caussidière was certainly pleased. Though it was not so much, he said, as the old miser might have sent, it was certainly acceptable under the circumstances.

After taking care to pocket the draft, he tossed up the boy and kissed him, and told Marjorie he looked as if she coddled him too much. Then he prepared to leave.

'Shall you be back soon, Léon?' asked Marjorie timidly. Whenever she addressed him now she was always fearful of the reception of her words.

'I shall not return at all,' answered Caussidière; 'or rather I shall be late, as I dine with a little party of friends. Do not sit up for me.'

And with another kiss blown airily to his offspring he was off.

Marjorie did not cry or show any sign that this conduct distressed her. She was too used to it for that. She turned in tender despair to her only comfort—the child. They sat alone together, the little one perched on his mother's knee, listening open-mouthed as she talked to him of her old home. She told him about Miss Hetherington, about the manse, and Mr. Lorraine, who lay quietly asleep in the little kirkyard. How strange it would be, she thought, to take their little one there. How Miss Hetherington would love him; how old Solomon would stare and call it 'uncanny' to hear him prattling so prettily in French. Ah! but would the day ever come when she could take him there indeed?

Long after the child had gone to bed, Marjorie sat by the fire thinking of those happy days; she wrote to Miss Hetherington, concealing as well as she could the dark spots in her life, speaking cheerfully and happily of her little boy, and still dwelling upon the hope of one day bringing him to her old home.

Then she sat down to wait for her husband.

Caussidière was late, and when he appeared Marjorie saw at a glance that all his good humour had left him. He was angry at finding her up; accused her of wishing to time his going and coming, and peremptorily ordered her to bed. Without a word Marjorie obeyed; she saw that he was rather the worse for liquor, and that anything she might say would provoke him.

The next morning she rose early, according to her usual custom. To her amazement, just as she was about to give the child his breakfast, Caussidière came down.

He had dressed with unusual care; he took his breakfast silently, and when it was over he went upstairs again to add a few more touches to his already carefully made toilet; then he re-appeared, nodded to the boy and to Marjorie—he was too well dressed to touch either—and left the house.

Though he had said nothing, Marjorie was certain from his dress and mysterious manner that it was no ordinary work which had called him away that morning, and as she thought of the strange cold way he had left her, her eyes filled with tears.

Suddenly there was a knock at the door. Hastily brushing away her tears, Marjorie

cried '*Entrez*,' and the door opened, admitting a woman, none other indeed than Adèle of the *Mouche d'Or*.

Of all the women of Caussidière's acquaintance, this was the one whom Marjorie most wished to avoid. She was half afraid of Adèle, since she had on one occasion heard her singing one of her songs in a café crowded with men. Marjorie's strict Scotch training made her shrink from communion with such a woman. When she saw Adèle's face therefore, she felt troubled, and demanded rather coldly what she sought.

'I seek Caussidière,' returned Adèle. 'Is he at home?'

'No,' returned Marjorie quietly, 'he has gone out.'

She thought this answer was conclusive, and expected to see Adèle disappear, but

she was disappointed. She came in, closing the door behind her, walked over to little Léon, and patted him on the head.

Léon gazed up and smiled: he had no fear of her; but Marjorie made a movement as if to protect him from her touch.

As Marjorie came forward, Adèle looked up from the boy's curly head, and asked, almost roughly:

'Where is Caussidière, did you say?'

'I do not know,' returned Marjorie, drawing her boy towards her; 'he did not tell me.'

'He seems to tell you very little about himself, madame,' said Adèle, fixing her eyes strangely upon her companion's face; then she added suddenly: 'Why do you draw the boy away from me?'

Marjorie did not answer, so, with a short, hard laugh, the girl continued :

'I suppose you think, madame, that I am not fit to touch him, that my touch will contaminate him ? Well, perhaps you are right!'

'I did not mean that,' returned Marjorie gently.

'If I kissed the little one, would you be angry ?' cried Adèle, with a curious change of manner. 'Ah, madame, I am bad enough, but not quite so bad as you think me. I love little children. I once had a little boy like this of my own.'

'A little boy ! then you are married ; you have a husband ?——'

'When my child was only a baby, before he could walk or speak,' continued Adèle, not heeding the question, 'I—I lost him. I

do not even know if he is alive or dead.'

And she lifted little Léon in her arms, and kissed him wildly.

Marjorie's gentle heart was touched.

'You lost your child?' she cried, full of sympathy.

'He was taken from me, madame. I was too poor to keep him, and one night—one cold winter night—his father placed him in the basket at the Foundling. I have never seen him since—never!'

'How wicked of you; how cruel! To desert your child!'

'You do not understand. In France it is the custom when folk are poor.'

Marjorie shrank from the woman in horror. All her maternal heart was in revolt, and with an impulsive gesture she drew

little Léon to her, and embraced him tenderly.

Adèle looked at the pair with a strange expression of mingled sorrow and pity.

'And your husband, madame?' she asked suddenly. 'Is he good to you?'

'Yes. Why do you ask?' said Marjorie, in surprise.

'Never mind!' returned Adèle, with her old laugh. 'For myself, I think that all men are *canaille*. It is we others, we women, who bear the burden, while the men amuse themselves. Why does Caussidière leave you so much alone? Why does he dress so well, and leave you and the little one so shabby? Ah, he is like all the rest!'

'What my husband does,' cried Marjorie indignantly, 'is no concern of yours. I will not hear you say a word against him!'

Adèle laughed again.

'You are only a child,' she said, moving to the door. 'Will you give Monsieur Caussidière a message from me?'

'Yes, if you wish.'

'Tell him he is wanted to-morrow at our place; he will understand.'

She half opened the door, then turned and looked back.

'Do you know, madame, that in a few days the Germans will be before Paris?'

'Ah, yes!'

'Let them hasten! I hope they will come soon. I shall not be sorry, for one, if they burn Paris to the ground!'

'Why do you say that?' cried Marjorie, shocked at the speaker's tone as well as the words.

'Let them burn Paris, and me with the

rest of the people; it will be well!' said Adèle in a low voice, very bitterly. 'The bonfire is ripe, madame! But,' she added, 'I should be sorry if any harm came to *you*, or to the child. Some day, perhaps—who knows?—I may be able to serve you. Will you remember that?'

'What do you mean?' exclaimed Marjorie. 'You are a strange woman; you——'

'I am what I am; sometimes I think I am a devil, not a woman at all. Goodbye!'

And without another word she disappeared, leaving Marjorie lost in wonder at the extraordinary interview between them.

END OF VOL. II.

BILLING AND SONS, PRINTERS, GUILDFORD AND LONDON.

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 02 July, 2018